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UNDER THE SYRIAN SUN

VOL. I

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SYRIAN SHEPHERD BOY.

UNDER THE SYRIAN SUN

THE LEBANON, BAALBEK GALILEE, AND JUDÆA

By A. C. INCHBOLD
Author of
"Phantasma," "Princess Feather," "The Silver Dove," etc.

WITH 40 FULL-PAGE COLOURED PLATES
AND 8 BLACK-AND-WHITE DRAWINGS
BY
STANLEY INCHBOLD

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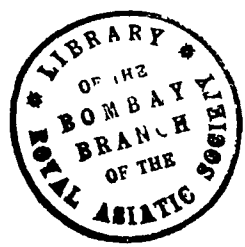

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UNDER THE SYRIAN SUN

CHAPTER I

FROM THE SEA TO THE MOUNTAINS OF LEBANON

THE sight of the mountains of Lebanon from the sea was a revelation. The sea itself was the colour of lapis-lazuli, the sky of turquoise-blue. Between sea and sky the mountains rose and receded, ridge upon ridge of atmospheric spectral appearance showing, as through a transparency, the markings of forest and chasm, the villages and towns lying snugly on the slopes, or remote on the distant peaks of the various hill-ranges. Their beauty of form remains ever mysterious and wraith-like, whether veiled by the sunlight in an atmosphere of delicate shades of lavender and pallid greys, or transmuted by the setting sun to the colouring of amethyst and rosy pink, while the sea, as if in worship at their feet, deepens from rose to the ruby hue of wine.

The wind was so strong off Beyrout that an hour slipped away in making attempt to anchor. We had to steam out to sea again, and then return to leeward under the quay, instead of anchoring as usual within the harbour. The boats that swarmed to the ship's side seemed precariously small in comparison with the Jaffa boats, scarcely equal to the double task of conveying passengers and baggage in a stiff breeze the distance of half a mile to the landing-stage.

The customs were no longer a sinecure—that is to say, a matter of discreet backsheesh administered at the psychological moment. One of the perennial telegrams from headquarters at the Sublime Porte had been received, giving warning of the attempted smuggling of contraband arms into the Lebanon. Everything belonging to anybody and everybody, with no respecting of persons, was examined with the maximum of fuss and noise. The whole place was like a bear-garden in conjunction with the shrill chatter of the monkey-house. It was only by exercise of our most skilful diplomacy that we escaped leaving our typewriter in the grip of these energetic netters for the Turkish revenue.

At last we drove off to our pension, a charming house with a garden in which we dined later under the trees. The breeze of the afternoon had dwindled towards sunset into a languid zephyr, deliciously cool after the blazing heat, and laden with perfumes of the flowering shrubs and trees. Of Beyrout itself upon that visit we received no more than the fleeting impression of a drive by moonlight through the shadowed streets,

past the closed bazaars, the open-air cafés, and the fine residential houses of the suburbs, which we left behind before reaching the pines on the Damascus road, a favourite corso in Beyrout for riding and driving.

July had begun. The town was deserted by all who could fly from the vapoury heat of the plains to the hill districts, where the air is dry though often intensely hot. Accommodation in the highlands of Lebanon is improving and increasing yearly.

It was early morning, barely six o'clock, when we drove out to the first station on the Beyrout-to-Damascus railroad in order to avoid the worry of renewed official research in our baggage at the terminus. The drive wound through the suburbs and out towards the foot-hills of Lebanon in gradual ascent, with mulberry-groves, pines, and luxuriant growth of fruit trees and shrubs of all kinds spreading right and left of the dusty roads.

The train journey was a continual climb, the railway mounting by rack and pinion like many an Alpine one, three or four miles between the stations, a distance that required the space of twenty minutes or half an hour to cover. Over and around, height upon height we climbed, passing terraced hill-slopes of vine or mulberry, gazing into the remote depths of a mountain gorge, at every turn taken by surprise with glimpses of tiny villages perched on apparently inaccessible hill-summits or precipitous cliff-side. And always the sea, "the deeply, beautifully blue" sea, and the glorious plains spread out below in their full beauty of dazzling light, or revealed in magic peeps through fissures in the hillsides.

Half-way to Damascus we alighted from the train at the station of Ain Sofar, almost the highest point of the railway at an elevation of some 4,000 feet above sea-level. Opposite the station stood a large hotel, originally built as a speculation, with the laudable object in view of making Ain Sofar the Monte Carlo of the Lebanon, and, in fact, of the whole of the nearer East. For some time after it was opened every effort was made to render the summer season spent there a fashionable casino life with *petits chevaux*, roulette, and cards. Though the play, as far as the *petits chevaux* gambling was concerned, had been stopped by a special irade of the Turkish Government, the hotel was, and still is, a fashionable resort for the gay and wealthy folk of Beyrout, Egyptians, and rich Syrians generally. It is a spot where the most incongruous contrasts of Parisian or Viennese fashions, with mountain scenery of the ruggedest description, and the native life of Lebanon peasant or nomadic Bedawin, are continually in opposition. So marked is it at times as to present a spectacle at once ridiculous and lamentable.

We passed the modern caravanserai of many stories and staring windows, its chief outward attraction the magnificent prospect of mountain scenery and plain from the terrace, and went on to a small native locanda, for we shunned the shadow of Western Philistinism on the heights of these beautiful mountains. Tea was our first refreshment, for it was a baking day, the beginning of a burning sirocco that endured for three days. Then we rested, with an interval for lunch, until three o'clock,

by which time the carriages were ready for our drive to a highland village some ten miles away.

The road had only just been finished, by express order of the governor of the Lebanon, in time for the arrival of the British Consul-General, who was going to spend the summer months of this year at the same Lebanon village. The highway was still very much in the rough, and, in part of the drive, entirely blocked with huge stones which the natives, at work building a parapet to safeguard a dangerous bend in the road, had to remove before the carriage with its team of three horses abreast was able to proceed.

The glare occasioned by the sirocco heat was excessive, for the rough, rocky environment was singularly bare, and destitute of shade, with very few trees scattered scantily on the mountain-sides. About two hours before reaching our highland village it came into view, perched on a hill at apparently no great distance, with a background of other hills rising high above, and the flat, quadrangular roofs mounting like terraces near and over one another, presenting the effect of a castellated height.

Between us, however, and our desired haven was fixed the great gulf, in the form of a broad and exceedingly deep ravine through which purled a Lebanon stream, spreading the green fertility in its wake that was lacking to the grey aridity of the exposed heights. The precipitous hillside, climbing up to our right, was covered with small pines, less dense and more straggling, but similar to those on an Italian slope.

It is these hidden beauties of the Lebanon, bursting suddenly upon one, in contrast with the scanty vegetation of the limestone heights, that constitute one of the chief charms to the traveller. Even to the mere passer-by there is a fascination that urges nearer investigation, but leisure and opportunity, mothered by the spirit of solitude, are the guides which best conduct to close knowledge of the wealth and beauty constituting the full glory of Lebanon.

The road proceeded for some distance on the brink of this beautiful wadi, but then descended by a slow and winding gradient, with pines and undergrowth on either side, to its depths, passed over a bridge spanning the river, and then zigzagged upwards with many a precipitous corner, for a mile or more, to the plateau crowned with the nest of Druse and Maronite houses. Mulberry-groves on terraces and in small plantations grew everywhere around the village, and between the sun-bleached roofs. Here, as on the lower slopes of Lebanon, were whole acres laid out with the "spreading vine of low stature," terrace upon terrace in luxuriant fertility.

The locanda[1] was of recent completion, reached from the high-road on foot, by a path so rocky as to be difficult to climb. A yard, bare, stony, and strictly unadorned except by a leafy booth, stretched in front of the house, which was constructed in Syrian fashion, with the pillared entrance above a flight of steps, doors to the left and right, and a second entrance into the lewan, lined by the

[1] Small hotel.

THE VILLAGE OF AINZAHALTA.

To face page 6

bedrooms of the summer visitors. The balcony of the lewan, extending along the glass front, overlooked the village and the amphitheatre of hills surrounding it.

Exactly opposite, rising from the further side of the concealed wadi from which we had climbed, rose a hill of conical shape with a flattened summit. Clouds were heaped above it, grey but luminous with light, the outer edges white against the sky; right over the hill they cast an all-embracing shade, while the hill-range beyond was pale yellow and delicate in the sunlight. Over the bosomed outline of a more distant mountain chain cloud-shadows passed, melting into fresh forms the lower the sun dropped towards the western horizon. The hill of shadow looming across the ravine stood out ominous and dark against the sunlit background. Pine-trees were darkly outlined on the summit which, according to imparted information, had been levelled artificially at one period. It was a hill of worship, where secret rites of unknown nature were supposed once to have been held regularly by the Druses.

This village of Ainzahalta was, strictly speaking, a Druse village, though there was also a community of Maronites who had a church of their own on the spot. They lived peaceably enough together, though never intermarrying, and interchanged many ceremonious complaisances in spite of their religious antagonism, such as assisting in the jubilations of the marriage festival or the cries of lament over a dead body.

The smartest of the Druse men wore full white pantaloons of the usual Oriental kind, an embroidered

vest, and a coloured or plain zouave; over the whole, when considered essential, a black abbai or haik. Their forehead and head were bound by a snow-white fillet, placed in close folds, not voluminous like the Moslem turban. Their general aspect was one of strict cleanliness, and superior, independent bearing. The workers in the fields or with the silkworm industry adopt a more *négligée* costume, as can be observed in the drawing of one who is seen busily engaged in his work.

The feminine dress had also a distinction of its own in the full dark blue shirt drooping to the ankles, and the close-fitting but open bodice which discloses the folded chemisette of muslin to the waist, and is there drawn in to fit the lines of the figure with silver or metal clasps, generally of massive work. On the head is worn no longer the high horn formerly associated with the Druse national costume, but simply the long white veil of the ordinary Syrian woman, allowed to float freely over the shoulders to the knees with graceful effect, unless when in view of the opposite sex. When taken unawares on these occasions, the face is swiftly veiled, with the exception of one mellow, bewitching eye. For the Druse women have beauty of a marked, even distinguished type.

The Maronite man will don, instead of the snowy fillet, a coloured scarf tied carelessly round his head, and sometimes the ordinary keffiyèh. His pantaloons are generally blue, and his coat, striped in colour, hangs loose to the knee. The Maronite women do not always wear the white veil, and being Christians their

faces are uncovered, but they cover their hair with a coloured mandeel, sometimes elaborately worked, or if somewhat superior to their neighbours, with a black lace scarf. These details are not only applicable to the one village but to the majority of hamlets in the highlands and lowlands of Lebanon.

Even in this remote spot one of the British Missions had planted a station of work. The house was within a stone's throw of the locanda, and boasted of a pleasant garden, graced by the refreshing shadow of two magnificent walnut-trees, under which, by the kind courtesy of the two ladies in residence, we were often allowed to enjoy the luxury of a few cool hours.

The villagers were awaiting with no small degree of excitement the arrival of the British Consul-General, Mr. Drummond Hay (now Sir Robert Drummond Hay), and making every preparation to receive him and his family with every honour they could demonstrate, in accordance with national custom. The house to which the visitors were coming—divided only by a small mulberry plantation from the locanda—was frequently invaded on the eventful day of arrival by natives eager to give voluntary help in the preparations. The flight of steps conducting to the entrance if swept down once that morning was done a dozen times ; the railings and the portal were festooned with branches of the poplar and pine trees of the vicinity.

Guns were let off at any moment, and at any corner of the village, or even under the windows, keeping every one in continual stir and start. I was

sitting with a fellow-guest in the booth at the end of the courtyard overlooking the road when a shot whizzed through the fading foliage overhead. Coming out in haste we saw that the aggressors, a party of villagers who had taken their stand in the yard to test their weapons, were advancing towards the booth in some trepidation.

"What is the meaning of this? Such recklessness is unpleasant," we made remonstrance in dumb speech that signified its own amazement.

One of the men, of picturesque and martial bearing, came up to me with his gun in his hand, and pointed significantly to the trigger.

"Inghilterra!" he said in a pleading voice. "Inghilterra!" He was trying hard to convey to us the idea that they were doing it all for England's sake.

And this was true, for the Druses bear a particular goodwill to England and all that is English. Their reasons for cultivating this favourable attitude will explain themselves as their character and the nature of their religious belief become further disclosed.

Early in the afternoon a single gun was suddenly fired, and then arose promptly the slow chanting of men's voices in strains that appeared to ring the various modulations of three notes only. Down the road leading away from the Consul's house, where they had been gradually collecting, marched at their ease a body of men in native gala costume, all singing, with guns in their hands, and shooting at random into the air, an accompanying salute to their songs of welcome.

The sky was tropical, the air filled to stifling with sirocco fumes, which, circulating in slight breezes, set the poplars lining the road in motion, sending flickering sheen from their slim tree-tops to the grey of their silvery stems. The mountain-sides radiated a great heat, while the new-looking tiled roof across the mulberry-grove blazed to scarlet in the glare of the sunlight. The predominant colourings, blue and red, of the men's costumes stood out in brilliant relief against the thick-leaved battalions of the dwarf mulberry-trees planted in the rich, reddish soil. Through the trees wended in and out figures of women in their blue skirts and long veils. Here and there in silhouette against the blue sky a figure stood out on a house-top, while others of the villagers grouped themselves like birds on the walls that banked the paths and road.

The men were on their way to the bridge at the foot of the hill, where, in the wayside khan, and by the mill where the stream rushes with the vivaciousness of champagne through the arches into an eddying pool, they intended to keep watch and bid their favourite Consul welcome to their mountain home. Towards evening they returned in triumph and continued the festivities of welcome until midnight. Bonfires were lighted and dancing was in progress for many hours before the Consul's dwelling, and later in the courtyard of the locanda for the entertainment of the visitors from "Inghilterra."

In the deep wadi at the foot of the hill one met with the strangest contrasts at every turn, of wild

Lebanon scenery and sweet sylvan nooks of a typically English nature. And what was seen in one deep valley or narrow cañon was characteristic of all in a more or less wild and natural degree, according to accessibility and the proximity of habitations.

Here would be seen a rolling cragside scattered with boulders, and overgrown with rhododendrons, trees and bushes of them, wherever was to be found the smallest sustenance for their roots. Oleanders clustered near the water, their roses fresh and glowing in the cool recesses of the mountain, even beneath the ardour of an August or September sun. Here was a Syrian mill, quaint and even picturesque, worked by a stream diverted from the river; higher up the river yet another came to view with a curious rustic bridge slung from one side of the water to the other.

It was strange and delightful to find such a number of romantic spots hidden away between the cliffs. Baby brooks slipped unexpectedly into view from narrow passages in the rocks, tempting one to turn aside and trace them to their source. I scrambled over the water to a large stone in the middle of one stream which I had tracked from the place of its union with the river, and this is what I saw.

A sturdy little spring gurgled out of the rocks at the foot of a high background of tangled greenery, moss, and creepers hanging in festoons. Like quicksilver playing and glittering it fell in a tiny whirlpool which spread and merged into a mellow-voiced, limpid stream, deeply ensconced between high barriers of precipitous

cliffs of rich and varied hues. For in Mount Lebanon as well as the limestone formations there is also a sandstone formation of reddish and yellow hue, with a certain amount of iron ore and iron pyrites upon clay beds. The colours of the rocks were often of great beauty, and the effect of sunlight or the sunset glow upon many of the cragsides near Ainzahalta dyed the whole into a full gamut of glowing colours.

However, the undersurface of stony soil and rock in this little home of the stream was clothed and even concealed by ferns, moss, and undergrowth of every variety of soft-hued greens and greys, already displaying delicate suggestions of autumn tints. Dainty tendrils flung caressing feelers round the fallen bare branches of an uprooted sapling which stretched across the stream from one bank to the other. Summer insects had spun innumerable webs which bound leaves and stems under a spell of apparent enchantment, until winter frost or snow would bring all to a swift death.

A broad band of moss ran like a living ribbon up from the bed-rock of the brook to the root of a tree growing out from the cliff near the summit. The grey trunk grew downward in inverted position for several feet, then suddenly curved out over the stream and shot erect, spreading into small tufted branches of light-toned foliage, aspiring skyward. By the water edge grew a cluster of purple campanula. A solitary sister was growing higher up the rock, where emerald fronds of maidenhair lifted their dainty stems from a bed of glistening, water-sprinkled moss.

The opposite bank was edged thickly with the evergreen of the rhododendron. Great clusters of healthy osmundas, displaying a redundance as luxuriant as bracken on a Welsh hillside, wandered up the rock or bent to the mirror of water below. The tranquil rock, lying so demurely under its veil of green, burst beyond it into joyous waves over a rocky bed, and then slipped in swift concentrated current to a hollow in the rock, smooth and bevelled with the never-ceasing flow. In splashing content it sprang over step after step of rock, slipping between the stones, forming here a crystal pool with pebbled depth, and there a miniature cascade.

Overhead where the trees concealed it from view, the sky peeped through with clear blue eye only where the effect of summer heat and autumn rime had already worked havoc in the leafy boughs; for spring is late and autumn premature in these rocky fastnesses of Lebanon. A little bird darted from side to side in blissful indecision; there were so many tempting springs to try, such myriads of tantalising sunbeams to catch and water-flies to chase. High on the brink of the nearest crag stood a pine-tree, isolated, but cheerily green and fruitful.

Lower down the main stream another little burn from the opposite side of the valley came hurrying to join it. Near the meeting of the waters its banks were lined with willows, shot with sheen of silver and grey. A low native house with a mulberry plantation were divided from each other by the brook. The house was of two low stories, flat-roofed, the first story or foundation

affording stabling at night for the animals, a horse and mule, which were tethered to posts beneath the willows close to the little khan.

A modern water-wheel, with light-painted wood of an aggressive crudeness, turned on its axis between two barriers, now lazily, now swiftly, the water splashing and rushing with corresponding unequal rhythm. The current rippled merrily away between the narrow banks under a rough stone causeway flung carelessly across. It bent with serpentine curves, as if seeking an egress, then with sudden energy the waters expanded into a spreading pool which overflowed the broken masonry of the mill-bank in leaping rivulets finding its home in the river at last.

CHAPTER II

SOME CHILDREN OF THE LEBANON

TRAVELLING, until quite recent years, was attended by so many difficulties in Syria, that only those who united enthusiasm with love of exploration ever attempted it, except by the safest and best-known routes.

Fifty years ago there were practically no roads, only beaten tracks leading from place to place over the natural soil, or unbroken strata of bare rock. Roads were, indeed, hardly needed, for wheeled vehicles of the simplest nature were then unknown in the country, the mode of conveyance for man and traffic being necessarily by camel, horse, donkey or mule. Perhaps the worst and most arduous district to penetrate on this account was the mountainous Lebanon. The railroad from Beyrout to Damascus has only been constructed twelve years. The diligence road, beside which it winds for the greater part of the way, leading up to the highest passes and down to the plain of the Bekaa, was built by the French during their occupation of the Lebanon after the tragedy of 1860, and thus gives a date to the introduction of wheeled vehicles.

It was the visit of the German Emperor some

years ago that gave a tremendous spurt to road-making in Syria. As in the days of old, so in the present time, the rough places are made plain, the crooked paths straight, and roads prepared even through the wilderness, when Oriental authorities in high places are making ready to welcome the visit of a great king or dignitary. In every way that is in their power they seek to facilitate his progress through their own dominion, even to making roads where roads have never been made before. Much of this labour was expended in vain, for a sirocco of the rare duration of twenty-one days also gave welcome to the Imperial travellers directly they set foot on the shores of the Levant. Travelling became so painful a pleasure under these conditions that the visit had to be summarily curtailed. Several of the roads in readiness were never entered upon at all, and have since fallen into entire disuse. However, the necessary impulse once given seems to have worked effects elsewhere, for at present no better carriage roads than those in the district of Lebanon are to be found in all Syria.

This is only by way of explanation before stating that the new road, only just completed between Ain Sofar and Ainzahalta, and on which we were presumably the first travellers by carriage, after winding round the village, continued, with many bends, to ascend the hillside beyond. The steep declivity to the left was barred by a low parapet of great stones which did not hide the depth of the mountain fissure beneath, nor the opposite crag with its remarkable strata and massed

débris of brilliantly hued rocks, the vestiges of some pre-historic volcanic eruption.

The summit was crowned with a small forest of pines, among which in summer-time open-air life could be enjoyed to perfection under conditions of ease and good fare, and having for a continual feast of æsthetic pleasure the wild, romantic beauty of a vast panorama. The proprietors of the colony of tents, established every summer between the pines, were Syrians, and thoroughly understood the art of making the "simple life" on the heights of Lebanon, an experience which, once tasted by their guests, was generally repeated in succeeding seasons.

The carriage road descended by short, steep curves to the valley of the Baruk on the other side of the hill, and continued as far as Bet-ed-Din, the summer quarters of the Governor of the Lebanon. His castle, with its colonnades, courts, fountains, and beautiful gardens, is a restored palace of Emir Beshir, of the noted Shehaab family, who was chief sheikh of the Druses at the time of the French invasion of Syria under Napoleon Bonaparte, and who, after Djezzar Pasha's death, allied himself with the English for a time, with the political aim in view of freeing his territory from the power of the pashas. The ambitions and vicissitudes of this emir's career are surprising enough to fill a book of themselves, and cannot be enlarged upon here.

Naoum Pasha, the Governor who had caused this new road to be constructed, with the object of connecting

SUNSET IN THE LEBANON: DJEBEL BARÛK.

To face page 18.

his summer seat of government with the railroad at Ain Sofar, was an Armenian by birth. He was also a Christian. Since the tragedy of the Christian massacre in Damascus and the Lebanon in 1860, when Europe interfered in the affairs of Turkey, the whole Lebanon district, exclusive of the town of Beyrout, has been an independent sanjak of which the Governor is required to be of the Christian religion, and his appointment sanctioned by the six Powers. Naoum Pasha, whom we had the opportunity of meeting with his wife on several occasions at the Consul's house, was a tall, fair-bearded man of good presence; he was in his tenth year of office, having been re-elected at the end of the first five years.

His wife, the daughter of a former pasha and governor, was of striking appearance, tall and dignified, with an abundance of auburn hair coiffed in the latest mode. She was a cultured woman, possessed great *savoir-faire*, and, like the majority of Syrian ladies, spoke French with facility.

Visitors to the high altitudes of the Lebanon are apt to flag upon their first arrival, until they have had time to become accustomed to the change of climate and rarefied air. Some people take at least a fortnight to get used to both. We recovered from the effects of the sirocco, and the journey in the intense heat in less than a week, and then started one day, in the cool of the morning, to visit the villages of Baruk and El Fureidis, situated some miles distant near the highroad to Bet-ed-Din.

The ladies in residence at the mission-house divided their labours, the one acting as hakim[1] to the village and vicinity, the other visiting the schools of villages far and near. The latter was an enthusiastic walker, knowing the neighbourhood well, and was thoroughly fearless. Under her kind guidance, we started on foot, followed by a donkey and muleteer, carrying provisions for the day, and the necessary sketching gear for the artist.

The way conducted through vineyards, laid out in terraces on the mountain-side, until gradually the ridge of the hill was gained, and we touched upon a broken track, which dipped over the opposite side of the same hill down to the hamlet of El Fureidis (Paradise), clinging to the steep side of the slope. The valley beneath showed a luxuriant vegetation of mulberry plantations and vines, through which meandered the River Baruk, artificially divided into three streams for purposes of irrigating the whole of that fertile bed. Across the valley was the village of Baruk, built terrace-like with the flat gleaming roofs rising one above the other.

Far up the towering mountain background was visible in miniature the dark outline of one grove of the only cedars that are now remaining of all the abundance of Lebanon's famous forests. Another small group still remains on the hills above Ainzahalta; the third and most frequently visited are those on Djebel-el-Arz (Hill of Cedars), 6,000 feet above the level of the

[1] Doctor.

sea, and easily reached from Baalbek. With the first glimpse of the remnant of those vast woods, which had once covered the whole mountain-range, we formed a firm resolve to climb the steep hill to the summit and see them at near view.

Stepping from the brilliant sunshine into the dim, cool interior of the little school-house, the eye had to accustom itself to the subdued light. The floor was earthen, hollowed and hillocked by age and use into compact cement; the ceiling of the room consisted of dark timber beams, formed of complete trunks of trees. Two stout plaster pillars, rugged and irregular in shape, divided the long, narrow room, and fitted in between the beams overhead, their grey hue striking the eye as white in contrast with the seasoned beams.

The tall figure of the native teacher advanced to meet us, his strong dark face breaking into a smile of radiant welcome. He wore the ordinary fez and full pantaloons with a coat.

Now the eye, accustomed to the change of light, distinguished first a long row of little bare toes, and then the sparkling interested gaze of small figures, squatting on the matting against two of the walls. Little figures clad in blue, and red, and white; little faces, deeply bronzed and delicately fair; little heads, with brown or black hair, curly or straight; little faces, bright and intelligent, shining with the fire of an ardent, delightful curiosity.

Between the plaster pillars a table stood in retreat, facing a low doorway with sides which showed the

thickness of the house walls, and the bright green foliage of the mulberry-trees in the sunshine without. Dark and intense in contrast stood out the figures on either side of the open door. And now the stalwart teacher marshalled forward a class of boys to face the table. The visitor opened the Bible, and every scholar read a verse in his turn, and when the passage was finished, question was put and answer received, the teacher standing at hand ready to prompt and support his pupils.

The verve and personal influence of their examiner roused thought and intelligence in the class. While they still stood before the table giving no eye to any but the one face confronting them, there suddenly appeared, framed in the open doorway, a tiny black-eyed maiden in blue, an older girl peeping round the corner. The little one stood open-eyed and wondering in heart-whole enjoyment of the scene, while the big girl was shy and horribly afraid of being caught peeping.

Then of a sudden the entrance became crowded with draped, veiled figures of women. The news had spread that strangers, who had never been to the school before, were there with the well-known visitor, and none could resist coming to verify report with their own eyes. Girls stepped inside the room, and, emboldened by the sight, in came our donkey-boy, and, unabashed, squatted on the floor in the most conspicuous spot he could find.

The first class stepped aside to make place for a second section of lads who read aloud from primers

and the ever-young and enduring *Peep of Day*. In the shadow of the great mountains of Lebanon, visible through the front entrance, the rapt little turbaned faces bent over their book at the chapter speaking of the story of Joseph, just such a lad as one of themselves, their lips moving silently to the slow rhythm of the one who was reading aloud.

Though the majority of the boys wore the red, or a white close-fitting cap, the head-covering highly favoured by all was an ordinary black straw hat, ancient and ragged, and that seemed to belong to all and no one in particular. Surreptitiously it passed from one hand to the other, that every one might experience in turn the gratification and privilege of wearing a covering so unique, and totally different from the jejune, everyday cap.

From El Fureidis we descended—

> "To see the green plants of the valley,
> To see whether the vine budded,
> And the pomegranates were in flower—
> To see the flowing streams from Lebanon."

We wandered along the river bank until we came to a green island, shaded by tall and thickly leaved willows, and there we sat us down to eat what constituted our "precious fruits," the goodly lunch provided for us. Saïd, our muleteer, with a little help, built a small wood fire between the stones to boil water for the inevitable tea, as much prized by the Arabs—when they can get it—as by an ordinary English dame. The word "tschai" is a magic word, conjuring up a

smile of delectable anticipation, and unlimited exertion from the most languid of Syrians in preparation of the necessary fuel at any time or season.

As we sat down under the trees, in the midst of a veritable garden of green, a Druse spied us out, and crossed the stream to make our near acquaintance, and sit in friendly commune with the Inglizi visitors, always attractive to his race. For, as was stated before, one and all of the Druses bear in their hearts a lofty notion of the important position held by the English nation among the nations of the world. Falling in with the custom of the country at once, we invited him to join the repast, an invitation in which he acquiesced with a cheerful alacrity and many salaams of gratitude.

It is undeniable that he proved to be a very hungry Druse, and he was grateful too, for with vehement speech and gesture he urged us to come with him and partake of hospitality beneath his roof, where he hoped, in the name of Allah, that we would also remain for the night.

The martial character and independent spirit of the Druses make all take a lively interest in the world's politics and wars totally unconnected with their own government. This man was insatiable in his demand for information concerning the late Boer war, and boasted of the number of Lebanon Druses who at a single word from the English monarch would set out in their tens of thousands to fight for his cause against the world.

We left him to discuss the affairs of the universe

with the artist, whom he had conveyed pick-a-back across the stream within sketching distance of a flock of black-fleeced goats with their herd, and set out for the schools of Baruk. One feat of supererogation awaited me on the way that was quite unforeseen. The river remained between us and our goal, and unless we undertook a lengthened walk, for which time and the heat scarcely provided, there was no means of crossing to the other side except upon the rocky, streaming ridge of a small weir. My companion, an adept in Lebanon climbing, crossed with comparative ease, but alack! for me there was no alternative but to take off stockings and shoes and wade knee-deep through the water. The icy coldness of that River Baruk was not readily forgotten, for it left the undesirable legacy of a severe cold, to which I allude on the simple score of warning to others not to go and do likewise in the quite tropical heat of a midsummer day in the Lebanon.

After a long walk through a labyrinth of stony paths, rough as the pebbled beds of a mountain torrent, we reached the school with its fifty scholars, big and small boys. The variety of costume was here more marked, tunics of old faded colours, striped red and white, or dark and light blue. Over these some of the boys wore embroidered zouave coats in black, brilliant orange, or plain white. Their headgear varied from the plain red skull-cap to caps of black astrachan, white wool, and velvet figured with silver. Bare feet alternated with old shoes and slippers displaying the bare feet thrust within.

The types of faces were extraordinarily diverse. There were grey eyes, and deep lustrous eyes. The grey-eyed had small chins and delicate features. The brown eyes were set in faces of a rounder, more solid cast, but brimful of intelligence. There were nervous, thin little faces, too, among them, with sweet dark eyes of mercurial activity and finely pointed chins.

A Druse sheikh followed us in from the village path, and took a chair by my side without waiting for an invitation or permission to be present. From time to time he turned solemn looks of inquiry through a pair of huge, brass-framed spectacles, upon the Inglizi visitor to the school, more especially when anxious to note the impression made by his son's erudition displayed in reading English from the primer. His son, by the way, was already a shoemaker, and though then an ex-member of the school, had hastened to leave his occupation—doubtless at the father's bidding—and hurry within to take a proud share in the examination and reading of his comrades.

For this special village of Baruk the continent of South America holds a special interest, Buenos Ayres being the town to which many of the people emigrate. The sum-total of the Druse sheikh's meditations during the half-hour spent in the school was revealed in the question put at the close with a great show of earnestness :

"Do the Spanish people of South America resemble these English people ?"

The closing hymn, sung with great heartiness, was started by the missionary visitor to the tune of a Turkish

national air. Through an open window peered the heads of veiled women, with smiling and delighted eyes, one holding up a spotlessly clean, fair-haired child to watch the singers.

From this school-house we went on to the girls' school. On the way through the village we passed a number of Druse women sitting within the cool recessed entrances of their houses, who gave us pressing invitation to enter, and appeared deeply disappointed at our refusal for lack of time. They were all of an exceedingly handsome type, wearing their abundant hair woven in thick plaits, which they wound round the head and chin making a unique setting, like a frame, for their truly classical, marble-hued faces. Their spotless veils hung over the head and nearly to the ground in straight flowing lines.

The building we now entered was a new one with mud walls, and cemented floor, with no glass to the windows, only iron bars across, letting in the sweet mountain air and sunshine. The girls sat on low benches round three sides of the room, the infants with folded arms as in an English school; little dark heads with clear skins, sun-browned, and wonderful eyes, melting and big like those of their mothers whom we had just seen.

A row of older girls sat in the middle of the room, several with white veils, others with head-shawls folded cornerways and tied beneath the chin: green, scarlet, and purple mingled with the white. Some of their sweet-sounding names, for which I made inquiry, still linger

like music in the mind: Hafiza; Naifeh, which means "delicate"; Hacibeh; Saida; Yacod; Drea; Kitsyia; and so forth, all bearing some under-current of meaning.

Outside those barred windows were the everlasting hills and the grey rocks bathed in sunlight. Within, the voices of thirty Syrian maidens, singing with spirit and whole-hearted joy of aspect:

> The Lord is our Rock—in whom we abide,
> A Shelter from the stormy blast.

In winter-time the number of these girls increases to as many as sixty, but in the summer there is work for them to do elsewhere; education must be secondary. The teachers of these two schools, the boys and the girls, were brother and sister, and when their duties for the day were over, they joined us by the river-side, where we found another shaded retreat beneath willows, and had tea all together before starting on the homeward route.

A few days later the villagers excelled themselves in celebrating the great occasion of the Consul's birthday. The balcony of the lewan in his house directly overlooked the roof of the lower part of the building, stretching out like a broad spacious terrace. A series of small bonfires was lighted on the border of two sides, while the other sides of the roof were thronged with the picturesque figures of Druse and Maronite highlanders, the gay colours of their garb and dark faces with flashing eyes weirdly illuminated by the environment of leaping flames. They

danced untiringly on this terrace until nearly midnight, to the accompaniment of their own rhythmic hand-clapping, swaying of the body, and the shrill, half-melodious, half-plaintive music of their reed-pipes.

In the interval one of these men came into the lewan, where refreshments were being served for guests of the house invited over from the locanda, and performed some very clever sword feats. Two paper loops were suspended over two chairs, and upon these was balanced, with great care in the placing so as not to damage the paper, a stout stick of poplar wood. With one swoop of his sword the man cut the wood cleanly in two without breaking or stirring the loops of paper.

Another stick was produced, examined, and then placed across two wineglasses, which in their turn were raised on the top of a couple of empty bottles. Again the sword expert cut the stick in two, but, to his own intense chagrin, smashed one of the wineglasses, though the other remained intact. Nothing would pacify him but permission to make a second attempt. He did so, and with perfect success.

"A Chinese executioner to the life," whispered a bystander.

He withdrew to the roof to perform, in concert with a companion, a dance, called "the Sword Dance," with such realistic and excited action that it was with a measure of relief we heard they were both Christians. So quickly does the latent animosity between Druse and Maronite leap to sight at the smallest provocation that one can never tell what may not inadvertently be the tinder

kindling the ready fire. One dance followed the other in rapid succession, while at intervals the Arab coachman, dressed in his livery of white linen, quietly let off rockets almost under our noses all in honour of his master and Inghilterra.

CHAPTER III

THE TRANSLATION OF THE DRUSE SHEIKH

Mine age is removed and is carried away from me like a shepherd's tent: I have rolled up like a weaver my life; he will cut me off from the loom.

THE locanda was situated on the hillside. The flat sun-baked roofs of the village spread out below on the same plane as the mulberry tree-tops which enframed them, the colours combining to form a whimsical mosaic of multi-toned greens and greys. On the slope above the locanda were some Druse cottages grouped round an open space of ground serving as a court to the small community.

One of these dwelling-places stood on the bank immediately above my room. When the wooden shutter of the window which faced the passage between the locanda wall and the sheer rock of the hillside was swung open, there often descended to the ear from the Druse interior the sound of the querulous, high-pitched tones uttered by a very aged man.

One day the repose of our siesta was broken into by the clatter of rushing feet on the plateau below the house. A number of natives ran up the steps at the side, crossed without ceremony the open court of the locanda, and scrambled to the terrace above. From the loggia an

hour later figures could be seen moving hurriedly to and fro behind the breastwork of loose, piled stones that skirted the bank. They were handling a large piece of drapery which they proceeded to suspend over the court while they talked loudly in visible excitement.

"What has happened?" I asked of a native standing near.

"It is a death," was the reply. "The death of an old Druse sheikh who was a hundred and ten years of age."

Already a chorus of women's voices bewailed the dead. Their lament was both weird and affecting, though the musical phrase reiterated with unvarying monotony was crudely elemental. The clatter of feet over the stony track continued, the hum of voices steadily heightened. The day rapidly declined until valley and mountain-side became veiled in the golden rain of sunset rays. With the vanishing of sunlight, dusk dropped into night with tropical swiftness. At intervals the wailing of the women was strengthened by the admixture of male voices uplifted in a curious slow measure, both drawling and monotonous, the words being uttered with a quavering twang that was the quintessence of elegiac melancholy.

Dark figures still continued to thread the stony tracks from the village. They climbed the bank of crumbling débris and proceeded in decorous procession along the terrace singing their funeral dirge. Their heads drooped dejectedly on their breasts, the handkerchief carried in obtrusive evidence by one and all was pressed to the eyes with frequent dramatic action accompanied by sobbing upheaval of the chest. The portrayed emotion

could be regarded as feigned or spontaneous according to the viewpoint of the spectator.

Hearing that a visit would be regarded as a mark of condolence and sympathy by the dead sheikh's relatives, we resolved to betake ourselves to the scene of mourning. A broad area of light beneath the canopy which was suspended over the open space between the Druse cottages, was visible through the arches of the loggia, but a direct ascent of the bank, with its steep slope and stone barrier above, was impracticable. To gain the summit we had to cross the open ground in front of the locanda, to dip into a pebbly path, and then turn abruptly up the hill in face of a house standing at the end of a terrace occupied by the group of cottages.

It was a superior Druse habitation, constructed after the ordinary style in the Lebanon. The lower part consisted of stables and recesses for cattle, and provender entered through arches of massive stonework ; the upper dwelling was approached by steps opening into the large porch or loggia, which had two archways formed by slender pillars, while doors within gave entrance to the various rooms. The windows, also the arches of the loggia, were rimmed with a broad outline of white, which gleamed with a spectral pallor in the flickering light shed by some scattered petroleum lamps of primitive make.

We stumbled over the rising ground, passed the Druse house and its adjoining courtyard, and proceeded towards the canopied space, our goal. A vast crowd of sombre, draped figures, with wild eyes flashing below the snow-white bands wreathing their brows, was

collected on that bare terrace of earth. They sat in circles round lamps on the ground, or in groups on the stone wall guarding the precipitous bank to the right.

With becoming gravity of bearing we passed slowly through the crowded space towards an archway leading into the Druse settlement where the death had occurred. Three tall Druses, relatives of the deceased, stood there to receive the visits of condolence, and conduct the caller to the lying-in-state of the sheikh. They were eager to make way for us, manifesting open satisfaction at our appearance. With ceremony they conducted us through the archway, passing by the open door of a mean dwelling made temporarily attractive by a light on the floor within playing with lurid effect on the fantastic costumes of men, who talked together inside with animated gestures. But only a glance in passing, for attention was instantly absorbed by the sense of mystery in the air, our feet were drawn swiftly forward by the compelling notes of the women's mournful chant.

Suddenly we emerged on the squared enclosure over which from below we had watched the canopy dilate and subside like a sail in the evening breeze. Whither had the spirit led us? Was this a scene conjured up, by the necromancy of the dusky figures conducting us, from the age of the Patriarchs? And was that marble-still figure lying in state under the centre of the draped dome one of those historic characters whose names Biblical literature brings glibly to our lips, though our minds receive so vague and limited an impression of the local setting of custom and race?

It was a dignified profile, possessing the noble aquiline nose that signifies the power of command, the fine Eastern contour of cheek and chin, the prominent brow throwing into relief the sunken socket of the closed eyelids which doubtless concealed orbs as wildly bright in the heyday and pride of life as those of the men standing near. Round his head was rolled the snowy fillet, that outward badge which signifies that the Druse who wears it is a wise Druse, an akkal, who, through self-discipline and the outward marks of a blameless life—such as total abstinence from intoxicating drinks or the use of tobacco—has advanced so far in the wisdom of his religion as to be admitted into the Khalweh, their secret places of worship erected in remote places and closed to all outsiders, as well as to their own womankind. The dead sheikh was dressed in the garb of his race—full pantaloons, coloured vest, united by a broad sash; the whole surmounted by a flowing black robe which stretched in classical folds from head to feet.

The daïs on which he lay consisted of several mattresses resting one upon the other, their predominating colours of red and gold forming a framework for the statuesque sleeper. Two lighted candles were burning at the head, and one on each side of the white-socked feet. On the ground below the feet there stood a candle on a tall stand casting a circle of light, catching the eye directly upon approach. It was a facsimile of the candlestick referred to in Holy Writ placed by the man "that they which came in might see the light."

Grouped on the ground in a circle round the bier were the women, the only spot on the whole terrace where they were to be seen. The long white veils, drawn half over their faces, were hanging over their shoulders to the ground in unstudied picturesque folds that enveloped yet revealed the yielding lines of the figure. At first glance there seemed to be no method in the arrangement of this group, but it soon transpired that the mourners, one on either side of the daïs, completely covered by their veils, and bending close and low to the earth as if overwhelmed with calamity, were the dead sheikh's two aged sisters, one of the amazing age of a hundred and fifteen, the other a little younger. Squatting in a crescent round the head were the other women relatives, and behind them, and continuing the circle, were grouped women of the Druse religion. The large number clustered round the foot of the bier with the veils thrown off the faces and sweeping the ground behind were Christian women—that is to say, they were Maronites, or Greek Catholics.

There was a stir as we approached, and the women relatives signified their wish that we should be seated. We declined with courteous thanks and stood near, breath involuntarily halting with suppressed awe and sympathy. The simplicity, the naturalness of the open-air ceremony preparatory to the scene of the morrow's entombment, possessed a charm not wholly emotional.

Under the veils of two or three of the women peered forth a baby's curly head. A little child stood

upright in a small open space left round the tall candlestick. She looked, in feature and colouring, as if she had stepped out of one of Murillo's masterpieces. The big solemn eyes wandered round till they rested on our group, which held her in fascinated contemplation the whole time we stood near. Other children, boys and girls of tender age, slipped quietly in and between the women, or glided in the background like figures in a stage scene. The insistent rhythm of the women's chant aided the illusion.

It was explained by the Druse accompanying us that the man for whom they mourned was a sheikh and an akkal; that if he had been young, and still unversed in the practice and tenets of his religion, the wailing would have been more pronounced, even violent. He would have been carried to and fro, loud intercessions and laments would have been his portion.

But this sheikh had exceeded the allotted span of life. It was time that he should be born again. Hence their chanting was intended to be more a soothing accompaniment to the passage of his soul to a new life; a testimony to his many virtues, and the wisdom and goodness of a life brought by natural decadence of the physical part of his being to nature's death. He had been a wise sheikh, a good sheikh. He would therefore be born again in *China*.

"How blessed will it be when all people are born again in China," chanted the women, as we stood there, the belief of the simple-minded of their race being that the soul of a good Druse is always born again in China,

that of a bad Druse in Egypt. In a word, China is their ideal Paradise, Egypt their place of torment. They hold to the firm conviction that half of the Chinese of the present day have been Druses in their past lives.

"The gates of China are opening, his new parents are giving him welcome," continued the women. "He will be a prince, a pasha, a great man in his new home."

A commotion in the rear accompanied by the loud nasal singing of a fresh company of mourners diverted the attention of the gaunt, delicate-looking Druse at our side. Hastily he left us to receive his new guests.

Out of the obscurity a procession of dark figures slowly evolved into shape, headed by a fine-looking man arrayed in white woollen robes that only lacked the insignia of the cross to give him the appearance of a priest vested for religious service. Close behind him was a black-bearded man arrayed in cassock and mitre. They were respectively the mudir or governor of the village, and the Greek priest, with attendants and the heads of the chief families in the community.

All held a folded handkerchief in their hands, pressing it to their eyes when they halted every few steps to groan and catch their breath convulsively, while their dirge of lamentation dragged out in dismal notes of unison. These newcomers were so large a company that the surrounding space was thronged with figures. We retired a few paces and stood under a young

acacia-tree growing on the brink of the slope, its foliage casting grotesque shadows on the canopy lighted up from beneath. As the men approached, the women pulled their veils closer over their faces; their chant, lowered in tone, giving natural precedence to the masculine chorus.

These two functionaries of the village with their companions marched solemnly round the circle of women, the volume of lamentation increasing in agitated sound and speed. The circle completed, they came to a pause, though their voices ceased not from wailing aloud as they alternately dried their eyes and gazed upon the dead sheikh. Then with automatic precision they wheeled slowly round and marched gravely away, keeping up the same appearance of funereal woe, the harsh tones mellowing into plaintive indistinctness in the distance. Close at hand the women renewed with tireless repetition their monotonous plaint.

One lingering look at the living picture: that unconscious figure lying in subjection to the King of Terror yet manifesting naught but peace and repose in the placid dignity of the lifeless features; the body-guard of veiled women; the children in close proximity symbolising love clasping hand with death; the candle-flames typical of the vital spark fled from that motionless form to find new habitation according to their religious belief in the Utopian land of China—strange incongruity of symbol and ideal, survival and perversion in one and the same breath. Then a long gaze upwards, where, between the swaying border of the canopy and the

black edge of the flat roof opposite, a clear space of deep purple sky had become gradually suffused with a silvery bloom, which announced the rising of the crescent moon.

We turned to leave, and again faced the vista of figures crowding the open space beyond the archway. Dark, lustrous faces, with gleaming eyes smiling kindly at the "Inglizi" visitors, peered with undisguised curiosity through the dim atmosphere from all sides. Salutations of peace accompanied our withdrawal as we picked our way in the dark under difficulties of rock-strewn paths back to the locanda.

Women held their watch and prolonged their mourning dirge until daybreak. The places of those who were tired were filled at once by newcomers. Another visit of condolence was made early next morning by the mudir, attended by the same ceremonious details of lament. They then remained on the terrace with the relatives, and sitting in a circle they chanted their burial service at certain intervals for several hours before the interment. Deputations from the neighbouring villages, to which word of the death had swiftly been carried, also arrived in large numbers. The same musical phrase was repeated by each body of men as they trod the steep track from the village and mounted to the scene of mourning. It was evidently a customary elegiac tune to which was adapted an improvised eulogy of the dead to suit the occasion and personality.

The visit of ceremony to the dead sheikh's family

creating the most attention and grateful acknowledgment was that made by the British Consul-General.

Young men and old, children and babies in arms, all arrayed in best garments, congregated in the vicinity of the house. Boys in full pantaloons, scarlet or purple vests beautifully embroidered, with short coats and sashes round the hips, white turbans binding their foreheads, strutted round in conscious pride of festal array. The noonday sun blazed on the stony ground, giving to the grey roofs an obtrusive glare.

Then people began to bestir themselves briskly. A distinguished personage from Baaklene, the chief Druse centre in the Lebanon, had arrived to offer his condolences and be present at the funeral ceremony. This was the Sheikh-el-Akkal, the head sheikh of the Druses, holding among them a position equivalent in rank to that held by a Greek Patriarch; he made an impressive appearance surrounded by his subordinates, his tall black-robed figure surmounted by the white fillet, rising above them like a cedar in the midst of young pine-trees.

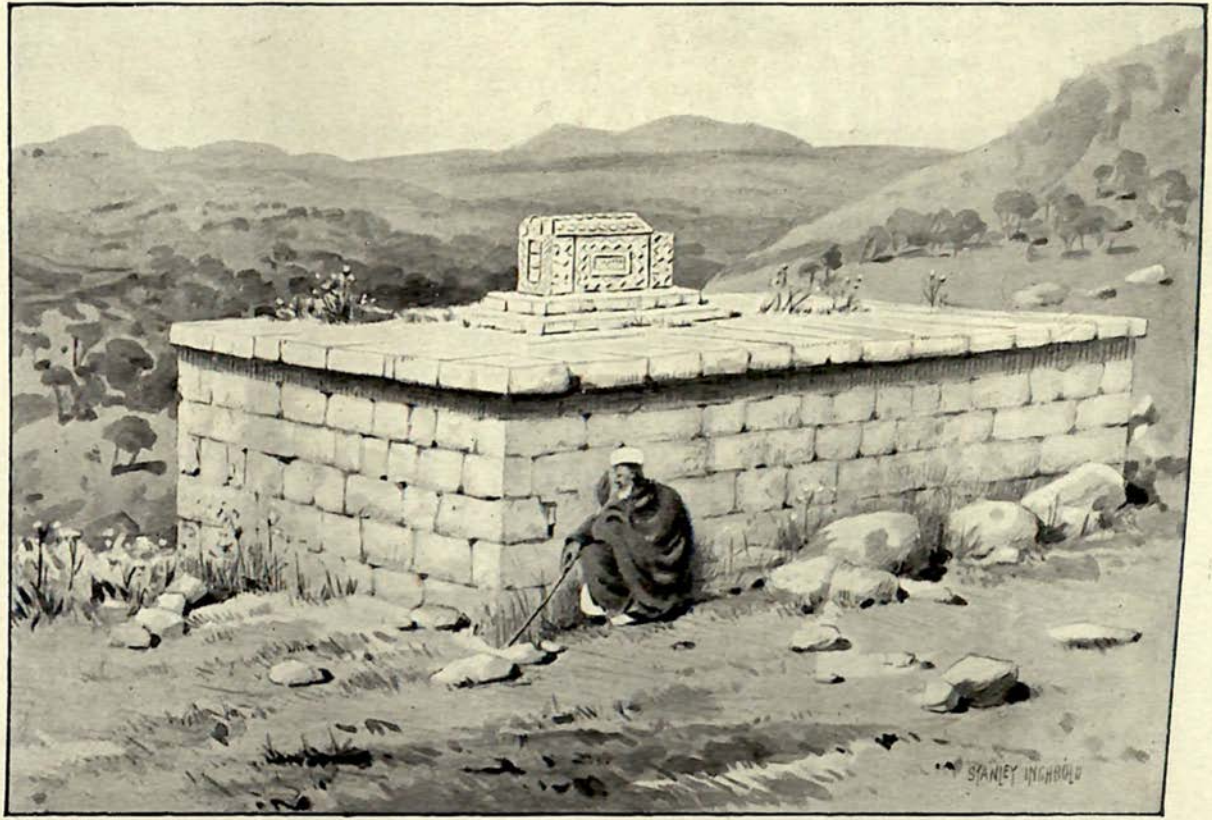
Soon after noon a loud wailing cry was uttered by the assembled company. Beneath the canopy, transformed in the sunlight into a dome of indigo hue, moved a struggling mass of men, their heads and shoulders just visible above the stone barrier. They were all greatly excited. In another moment they stood erect, bearing on their shoulders the burden of the dead sheikh's coffin. It was a roughly made case with no lid, and broader at the head than at the feet. The

body was concealed by a canvas covering strapped round the coffin with bands and ropes of divers colours. On one side was attached a plain white strip bearing the inscription, "Allah hakh!" (God is just).

About ten sheikhs, with the Sheikh-el-Akkal prominent in their midst, headed the procession as it advanced slowly along the terrace. The majority of the mourners walked in a crowd surrounding the bearers of the coffin, chanting without intermission the familiar funeral dirge. They descended the rugged track and turned to the left along the plateau beneath the northern wall of the locanda. Up they clambered over the stones to a path which wound close to the mountain-side.

Terrace upon terrace of mulberry-trees planted in red soil, and banked murally with rough stones, sloped abruptly to the valley. Gazing upwards, the stone-banked terraces, which stretched far as the eye could see, embosomed thousands of vines, heavy with the ripening vintage of grapes. Across the valley the lime-streaked cliffs rose sheer from the river concealed in the wadi-bed by pinewoods skirting its banks, and then merged into the parched brown slopes of an extended hill-range. The mulberry-groves were left behind. Odd-shaped patches of stubble-land divided by stone barriers came into view, with here and there a solitary group of pine-trees arresting the eye with their spreading crests of vivid green.

Now there came a stage of the way where the steepness of the slope yielded nothing but a spur of massive rocks rising in spiky turrets against the skyline.



DRUSE TOMB, MOUNT LEBANON.

These had split asunder under influence of summer sun and torrents of winter, scattering a heavy débris of boulders of all sizes and colours over the pathway. They made a quarry of the precipitous ground, which was only redeemed from absolute desolation by the magic effect of sunlight upon the colouring of the flints.

Along this rough ascent the crowd of mourners contracted into a lengthened train. The dirge of wailing waxed wilder and louder. It was evident that the place of interment was close at hand. Round the rocky spur of the hill, high up the bank, they came upon a small plateau of stone, containing one solitary building.

It was small and cube-shaped, built of large rough-hewn stones. The roof was flat and earthen, like the houses of the village. Narrow apertures, such as are seen in ancient towers, pierced the low walls at intervals. It was a Druse tomb. In most cases a Druse burial-ground consists of several of these stone structures, which are used in the manner of family vaults. They argue in favour of this mode of entombment that the ground is too rocky to admit of graves of sufficient depth to keep wolves away in winter, which is of severe character in the high mountain villages of the Lebanon.

The bearers deposited the coffin in the path beneath the tomb, and then withdrew to one side while the sheikhs and relatives of the deceased gathered round, bending low and uttering many lamentations, their folded handkerchiefs pressed intermittently to their eyes. At intervals came from the bystanders a loud refrain in response.

Then the Sheikh-el-Akkal, his commanding figure straightened with impressive dignity, repeated loud prayers in which he extolled the virtues of the departed soul. His oration ended, the coffin was replaced on the bier and borne with cautious steps up the bank, shifting and insecure to the foot with its flinty soil.

In the side of the tomb there was a low opening from which a big rock and many small stones had been removed. Now the ropes were unwound from the coffin, which was then slipped with noticeable celerity through the low entrance. In an instant the rock was rolled into its former position, the stones piled around it filling up every crevice, until the place of entrance was entirely concealed.

With the bearers one of the sheikhs had mounted to the plateau. When the interment was over, he crossed to the heaped-up stones, and crouching on the ground, his head close to the wall, he spoke to the man within, to the dead body which would never again be seen by these his fellow-sheikhs.

This was the purport of his parting message :

"If any one meets you in the land of your new birth and asks you the question to what religion you belong, answer that you are of the Druse religion, the chief of Mohammed's religions."

When he rose to his feet, every one present climbed the bank. Round the tomb they went through many genuflexions, putting their hands against their ears, then bringing them together again, with the back of one hand in the palm of the other, and dropping both in

front, while they declaimed farewells to the dead with admixture of eulogistic tribute after the manner of epitaphs. During this general speechification the imposing figure of the Sheikh-el-Akkal stood black and motionless against the steely glitter of the rocks, and then, lifting his hands with solemn gesture, while all pressed the handkerchief of ceremony to their eyes, he gave utterance to the peroration of the burial rites with rhetorical emphasis.

At the conclusion the mourners descended the slope and grouped themselves on the ground, when the mudir produced a paper, which he handed ceremoniously to the man sitting next to him. This paper, which was the dead man's will, was passed on by every man to his neighbour until, the circle completed, it returned to the mudir, who read the contents aloud. Silence greeted the disclosure, though later, and for days following, discontent and rage was displayed by those members of the family whose expectations had come to naught. The whole property was left to a grand-nephew of the tender age of six. No provision was made for the aged sisters. Nephews who had anticipated great things were blessed respectively with the magnificent legacy of twenty-five piastres, a sum amounting to a little less than five shillings.

After the reading of the will, the men got up from the ground and circled in slow procession round the spot where the coffin had rested in the pathway. A few interchanges of condolence ensued, accompanied by the wish that all present would be blessed with as long

a life as the deceased had enjoyed. Then the black-robed figures retraced their steps to the village, while the sun blazed fiercely on the plateau of rock, which bore on its adamant surface the humble tenement to the number of whose silent inmates had been admitted a brother Druse, of the same race, of the same mysterious faith.

We turned our back on the blinding rock, and lo! high above the valley, breaking the monotony of empyrean blue that had been pallid with quivering heat, hovered in gracious symbolism large white-bosomed clouds. Born of the sea mist, that after intense heat envelops the coast plains and floats eastward over the purple hills of the distant background, these were forerunners of the refreshing breeze from the west.

"Allah hakh!" the tongue repeats, while the eye travels over the sublime mountain-range, then casts a parting glance on the sheikh's tomb, "Allah hakh! for He bringeth forth the living out of the dead; and He quickeneth the earth after it hath been dead; and in like manner shall ye be brought forth from your graves. Let him, therefore, who hopeth to meet his God work a righteous work. Allah hakh!"

CHAPTER IV

VISITS OF CEREMONY AND A PERENNIAL CUSTOM

A VISIT of ceremony paid by the British Consul and his wife to some neighbouring villages had many points of interest. One charming consideration in making plans in advance was the uniformity of the fine weather. With the exception of an occasional sirocco, there was little variation in the wonderful days of that perfect Syrian summer. So in arranging the date of an expedition of this kind, there were no doubtful glances at the sky and barometer, for every one knew the weather would do exactly what was expected of it.

Again I had the pleasure of accompanying the Consul's wife. The Consul and the men of his party rode over the hill through the vineyards, while the carriage, as usual, went round by the road, the cavass all resplendent, and sword girded, in his ordinary post on the box by the coachman.

It was a beautiful drive right through the valley of the Baruk, and beyond Baruk itself to a village called Betelun, where one of the visits was to be made. The sound of gun-shots reaching us from afar announced the arrival

of the Consul's party; we were near enough to see the smoke from the discharged muskets curling overhead. But in making such calls of ceremony there is much precedent observed, and it was quite out of the question that the honour of the opening visit should be bestowed upon this first village in our way. Etiquette demanded that the village of Kafrnabrakh should head the list in the order of calling, and we approached Betelun just in time to see the Consul's white Arab vanishing in the distance, while the black-robed Druses, in their turbans of snowy whiteness, lined the roadside several deep.

Between these ranks the carriage had to pass. To the incessant crackling of muskets, the barrels pointed skyward, the spirited thoroughbreds, held in firm grip by the coachman, galloped by, not nervously, but in thorough sympathy with the wild vigour of the scene. On to the other village we were borne swiftly, nearly overtaking the riders, who halted on the road in front of Kafrnabrakh, which stood a little distance away.

The honoured visitors had been expected by the villagers to arrive by another route, so that all of them were assembled together at a distant spot in view, instead of near the carriage road. However, we were scarcely out of the carriage before a whole crowd of women came flocking over the stones from the village, their long white veils streaming behind them like festive banners, and followed by a train of Druse-clad manly figures, who came running helter-skelter to the spot, musket in hand.

Lady Drummond Hay was at once seized by willing,

too helpful hands, on both sides, and conveyed almost bodily over the rugged, stony ground. In the same manner the women pounced upon me—alas! the purple evidence of the fervour of their grip remained for days as testimony to the fervour of their welcome—while our Consul was right royally escorted by scores of stately, wild-eyed Druse men. At last we approached the clustering houses, and there again in the narrow way between the walls were rows and double rows of armed men.

Again the muskets were fired right and left into the air as we passed between, while copious sprinkling of scented water was energetically bestowed by the women, who also flourished the censers and greeted us with continuous ululations of joy as we entered the court and then the house of the headman, or chief sheikh of the village. As many men as could possibly crowd into the room of reception did so. There were handsome rugs on the floor, seats for the guests, and mattresses for the residential visitors. The sheikh was the only man who sat on a chair, with the exception of the Consul, his wife, and their party.

Around this central group of state were massed the thronging villagers. But not a woman was among them, though their voices were only too insistent and deafening in utterance of the joy-cries outside the room; and the open shutters revealed them in person through iron bars, hovering in excitement round every corner of the house. The usual rose-coloured syrups were handed round on a tray, with small towels as serviettes; and

then appeared the sweet Oriental confections that are made from fruit. These refreshments having been duly served and the trays withdrawn, one of the assembly stepped forward holding a large sheet of manuscript in his hand.

Then and there he delivered a long and flowery address to the praise and glorification of their favourite Consul, in metaphor comparing his innumerable excellent and attractive qualities to apparently everything in the heavens and upon the earth, beginning with the sun, moon, and all the stars, proceeding to the greatness and dignity of Mount Hermon, and winding up with a delicate allusion to the gazelle. Unfortunately a limited knowledge of Arabic hinders a more graphic and detailed rendering of the rare imagery of that fervid oration. Suffice it to say, however, that the people of the Lebanon, of whatever community, appeared to be devotedly attached to our British Consul, and this was one of the ways in which they made endeavour to prove their appreciation of the consistent tact, dignity, and kindliness with which they were ever treated by him.

Directly the recitative had come to an end a small boy of twelve hastily sprang to the front out of the midst of the crowd. Holding his paper at arm's length extended in front of him, he threw out the other hand with dramatic gesture, and began to shout his address at the top of his voice. He was a highly picturesque little fellow with the red turban pressed down upon his head, his capacious pantaloons, and gay little zouave embroidered in gold thread.

After this came the usual coffee at the end of the visit, and a little conversation concerning a feud in existence between the two chief families of the hamlet. The Consul signified his desire that the conflicting parties should be reconciled; in that case he would also confer the honour of a visit upon the other house, but would expect his present host, the sheikh, to accompany him in order to hear that the feud was at an end. Many protestations mingled with ceremonious interchange of the usual compliments of speech followed, and finally the visit was agreed upon.

Thereupon we rose and were invited to mount a few steps to an inner room where was a table laid out with fruit—figs, nuts, grapes, and peaches—but the chief feature of that small upper chamber consisted of the stone balcony upon which it opened out. One characteristic of the Druse race lies in their propensity for inhabiting, and especially for erecting their places of worship, on the most elevated spots of their highland haunts. From this balcony was to be seen one of the finest views of its kind that I saw in the whole Lebanon. Sheer down from the stone balustrade the precipice dropped to a vast chasm, of which the mere immensity and depth caused one to thrill with wonder and fear. On the towering mountain walls which looked down upon it from the opposite side were little hamlets, dotted here and there on precipitous slopes and crags, many a one in a site as precarious to the outlook as an eagle's eyrie. Pines and dark underwood of every variety mingled with the shady slopes and scrambled

down to the distant depths which gave evidence of the flowing stream by the wild luxuriance of rich green growth.

This wadi, lying fifteen hundred feet below our gaze, was the continuation of the wadi of Ainzahalta. The river was the Damur, the same of which we had traced several sources to their springs. What I did not hear until later was that the imposing cliffs of this wadi are subject to slides as disastrous as many an Alpine avalanche. A village had once stood on the brink of this same abyss which fascinated our gaze, of the same name as the village we were visiting. Suddenly the whole terrace crowded with human habitations parted from the mountains and plunged into the depths, only one person surviving the catastrophe and losing his reason from the shock.

We partook of the luscious fruit and then came away from the sheikh's house, escorted and guided on all sides, the guns discharging with the same chaotic irregularity and suddenness at every step until we approached the dwelling-place of the second chief man of the village. Here awaited us the same manner of reception and refreshment with washing of hands in the customary manner with the ewer. There were two addresses again delivered in the thronged room, and then ensued the scene of reconciliation between the heads of the respective families.

In like manner as we had been assisted from the carriage to the houses, so now we were conveyed with magnified vehemence of action and song over the stones

and hillocks back to the high-road. The riders followed the carriage, but before reaching the village of Betelun, through which we had passed earlier in the afternoon, we had to wait, for it would have been an outrage on etiquette for the ladies of the party to precede and not follow the Consul. Again came the outbreak of firing, and then we alighted by the wayside, though making quick discovery that the villagers had taken the trouble to make a special road to the chief house, in which the honours were to be dispensed. The Consul's wife, with her customary tact and gracious manner, ordered her coachman to follow us, in spite of the roughness of the new track. On the return we got into the carriage just outside the house and jolted and bumped over the road they had prepared to honour the visit. It was another ocular demonstration of the ancient custom to which I have already alluded in connection with the German Emperor's travels in the Holy Land.

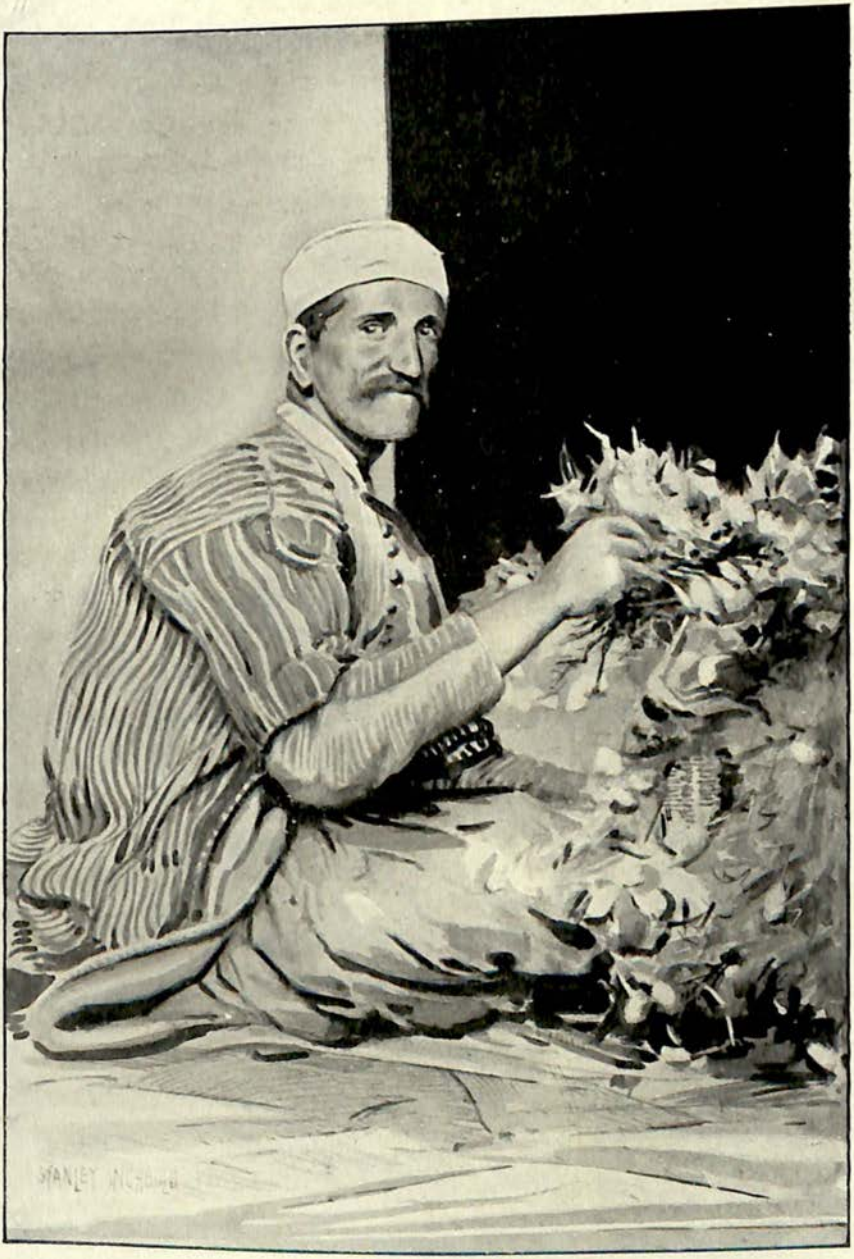
Here there came a change in the method of entertainment. This was a house with divans lining the walls of the room of state, but its limited capacity obliged even the host and the numerous visitors of his own village to remain outside. After partaking of sherbet and coffee we were, in consequence of the lack of accommodation for such an assemblage, escorted to a wide stone terrace, which was carpeted and provided with chairs for the ceremony of delivering the various addresses. A picturesque national dance, performed by a group of the men, followed, and then we were requested

to enter another room, where a sumptuously laid-out table presented itself to our astonished gaze. Delicacies rich and rare were spread out in the shape of sweatmeats of every variety, bought in Damascus and conveyed there specially for this valued occasion. For these visits of ceremony are announced in advance in order that the necessary etiquette may be carried out, and that every one who ought to be present should have opportunity of making arrangements to that end. This was the final visit that day. At last we made our adieux, got into the carriage, and this time, followed by the Consul's party, set out for home.

The life of the peasants in one village of the Lebanon was a sample of the village life generally, varied by the special industry which locality and climate combined to make most diligently cultivated. When the silk culture was first started in Syria, and the plantation of the white-fruited mulberry-trees (*Morus alba*) necessary to its practice, is doubtful, but we know that the Romans had silk fabrics from Berytus (Beyrout) and Tyre. The industry is alluded to frequently in records of crusading times, and in the Middle Ages had been of long standing in the land.

The feeding of the silkworms with the mulberry requires experience—that is to say, special training and close observation. Both leaves and worms are placed on shallow wide trays or shelves, which mount one above the other in tiers, lining the walls of the shed or special building devoted to their culture.

The foliage of the mulberry-trees was also put to



A DRUSE WITH HIS SILK-WORM COCOONS.

another use, which requires a little explanation. Soon after our arrival in the village we were particularly struck by an idyllic feature of the honest, independent life led by these hardy mountaineers. Every household appeared to have a pet in the shape of a snow-white, well-favoured lamb, upon which the whole family set great store. In every court, or at every threshold, was tethered this household pet. What was still more remarkable, the creature was always being fed—fed to repletion, for when it ceased to eat of its own accord, whichever member of the family chanced to be at hand made haste to tempt it to continue to eat by every art of persuasion or force.

There could have been no sweeter picture of simple-minded devotion to the nurture of pet lambs than was presented to the sight from the balcony of our little hotel. The blue-gowned Druse women, shrouded in their white veils, sat on the ground in the shadow of their house-walls, the lambs standing meekly before them, and at their side a great sack or basket choke-full of mulberry-leaves. As fast as the animals' jaws could crunch and chew the crisp, fresh foliage, the women thrust a new supply into their mouths.

The lambs seemed to grow visibly before our eyes, very quickly developing into fine young sheep. Twice every day they were led by their mistresses to the fountain by the roadside, where they were given to drink of the running spring, and their white fleeces, with the extraordinary tail from twelve to fourteen inches broad, drenched with the outpouring of several buckets of water.

As time advanced, this daily scene spread out before our eyes, that, at first, had seemed some sweet pastoral survival of patriarchal customs, afforded less pleasure in contemplation than uneasiness and even dismay, for the pastime of feeding the pet sheep began at an early hour in the morning and was diligently persevered in till the last thing at night. The sheep waxed so fat and cumbrous that no longer could they stand to be fed, but lay with panting side on the ground, the head pressed against a woman's knee, while she held its mouth firmly in one hand, and stuffed bunch after bunch of green leaves sideways between the teeth. And all the time that the women sat stuffing the sheep they talked incessantly among themselves, children ran races over the stones, chickens scrambled for bits, the donkeys switched their tales under a booth of dried twigs, and men passed to and fro, or squatted smoking on their roof-tops and the edge of the bank.

There came a day when the panting, groaning sheep could no longer be half carried, half pushed, to be watered and washed at the spring. It was a day of sacrifice when, for the sustenance of human life in the bleak winters of the highland villages, the sheep was led to the slaughter. The inhabitants have an ancient yet ever-new method of preserving the dissected animal with salt and spices in large jars, covering the whole with the enormous supply of fat from the tail, and sealing the jars for winter use. The process of stuffing the victims for long weeks in advance is a perennial custom in the districts of Lebanon.

In speaking of Druse women, who sat constantly in the open air, often unveiled, unless the approach of a strange man obliged a momentary withdrawal of the face, I must not omit to say that the Druses of the higher class, well born, and often bearing names of great antiquity, are very strict in their notions of womanly seclusion. There were Druse ladies even in that village who were never seen outside the court or garden of their own dwelling. The younger the wife the more rigid the restraint which kept her fresh young life concealed between walls, "a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" from all the world outside.

Some of the oldest families, dating farther back than any of what are called our aristocratic families, are now very poor. The continual party struggles of the Jambelat, Shehaab, and other powerful noble houses, for quite two centuries, when first one of the great emirs gained the ascendancy and then the other, reduced many of them to poverty. To-day the number of decadent princes of the Lebanon is astounding, also the straits into which some of the present representative heads of these houses constantly drop, but the feeling of *noblesse oblige* is still very strong among their fellow-countrymen. A Syrian gentleman who was travelling near Beyrout entered into conversation with the driver of his carriage, and asked him his name.

"Get down," he said, as soon as he heard the name, "and come into the carriage with me. My grandfather used to be your grandfather's coachman."

And this is only one of a score of such incidents of

frequent occurrence, though once the polish of education has added the glamour of outward refinement to the pre-eminently handsome figures and physiognomy of the Syrians, they are not to be distinguished from those of high rank. Instances came to my knowledge of men of humble origin in the Lebanon and other parts of Syria who have received a good education under the many advantages afforded by the foreign missions, and then passed themselves off in England or France as princes of noble family, their portraits even appearing as such in illustrated papers. To people who are well acquainted with the correct costumes of these high personages the deception is evident at once.

In one case where a Lebanon emir was the character assumed, the costume was made up of the gala garments worn by people of different status in the Lebanon. There were the full-skirted pantaloons, and the red fez, with a zouave coat, such as is worn by the military-looking cavasses of the consuls, and a wonderful belt stuck round with pistols and daggers galore.

Fortunately these are exceptional cases.

CHAPTER V

THE SPRING OF REFRESHMENT

SOLEMNITY and silence were embodied in the great sweeping stretches of mountain-range and precipitous slopes as the eye glanced upward from the road intersecting the valley bed. Over the Atlantean flanks and height was flung a mantle of grey and brown, embroidered with rich reds, and embossed with irregular masses of iridescent silvery shades. Here and there stood out blotches of vivid green in strong relief, "the cheerful colour" that maintains the balance of contrast and harmony necessary to render the contemplation of natural scenery gratifying to the sense of beauty.

A mental sensation of insignificance was involuntary as the eye uplifted to the rugged hill-crowns, veiled by the passage of stately clouds, which seemed to dip in salutation to the aspiring earth-peaks. Near the summits all was stony, yet austerely grand and imposing. At the base of the hills were spaces of verdure redeemed by husbandry from the shaly slopes; here a plantation of young pines, and there terraces of mulberry-trees.

And now there came a fissure in the mountain-wall to the right of the road, broad enough at the mouth to enclose an orchard of the same prolific mulberry

growth, and contracting at its far extremity into a jagged aperture stretching the whole length of the cliff-side, from which in winter would leap riotously the waters of a mountain torrent. Now, in the height of summer-time, the rugged lips were parched, yielding no outward trace of the little hidden spring, which, at the base of the rock, gave verdant life to that mountain retreat.

We turned aside from the road to investigate its secret charm, trod lightly the cloddy soil, brown madder in hue, that spread between the dwarfed battalions of glossy leaved mulberry-trees. The precipitous barrier on either side shelved upward rock upon rock, pinnacle upon pinnacle, intermingled with patches of shaly ascent. Groups of green-crested pines decorated the craggy eminences. Sage-green blotches of scrub, and grey sun-shrivelled herbage lurked in the crevices of the rocks, or rambled over the spaces of thirsty soil.

The head of the glen was clear and open to the sun. The trickling water of the rock-spring forced its way through an entanglement of willow and bramble foliage, growing in abandon at the foot of the precipitous cliff. A tiny brook wandered from the pool beneath the bushes, hollowing its course between the orchard and hillside to the road in the valley we had left behind. Three long-limbed willows, mature and strŏng, with knotty, twisted trunks and vigorous foliage, marked the exodus of the vagrant waters from the parent pool. Between these trees and the source stretched a carpet of young grass.

Beyond the green, lifting towards the turquoise sky

a tranquil face, and fed likewise by the mountain spring, lay a drinking-pond for the goats of the rocky pasture, embedded between steep banks. Minerals in the water had stained the rocks overhanging the spring with a sunset gamut of colour, roving from saffron to brilliant orange, from rose-pink to rich Indian red. Against this variegated background rested sprays of maidenhair ferns, the black stems and bared roots imparting, by force of contrast, a peculiar dainty freshness to the emerald fronds.

Looking back from the shadow of the willows, the range of hills stretching across the base of the glen, yet on the opposite side of the valley, looked like a gigantic wall barring the exit. Against the deep blue of the Syrian sky an extreme delicacy was imparted to the steely grey of its outlined ridge. The stones, and rock débris, scattered down the steep slopes, as if hurled into chaotic masses by some Cyclopean battle of a forgotten age, looked like lichen of giant growth, tinted with silvery hues of lavender and metallic lustre of blue and grey.

Suddenly an alien though sympathetic note of sound stirred the silent atmosphere: it was the clear, resonant tinkling of a bell. Its clang came from the heights facing the willows, and in another moment over the brow of the tallest peak there appeared, black and conspicuous, the bearded head and form of a large goat. It was the haughty, self-possessed bell-wether of a flock of many scores of goats that crowded with quickening steps in his rear over the ridge, and then scattered in

frantic speed down the craggy steep into the glen to drink of the water they scented from afar.

Silhouetted against the sky, a prominent figure until the last of the flock had passed over the ridge, the goatherd remained stationary on the height. With free, swinging step the young David of the Lebanon descended the hill, the long crook swinging from his hand, the massive head of a dagger, his weapon of defence against attack of wolves or bears on his flock, protruding from the tightly girded sash round his loins. Ringing with colour, the Syrian garb well became the warm-toned face, flashing, hawk-like eyes and pronounced profile. A scarlet turban was wound round the dark head. Over a shirt of nondescript shades hung a sleeveless abbai, striped crimson and gold. The full pantaloons of blue descended to leather gaiters; on his feet he wore the flat-pointed shoe of the Syrian.

The goats crowded round the pool and drank greedily. The delicate members of the flock were fed by the hands of two sun-bronzed lads, underlings of the goatherd. In the moment that thirst was quenched the sage-visaged creatures moved away from the water and wandered up and between the rocks, grouping themselves in statuesque attitudes in the shade of a boulder larger than its fellows, on the extreme ledge of a steep bank, or posing in rigid solitude like sentinels on the brow of some prominent head-rock. A detachment climbed higher afield to a thin plantation of pines, where they stood sleepily against the trunks, or

GOATHERD OF THE LEBANON.

lay on the needle-strewn soil with indolent ease in any morsel of shade that yielded respite from the glare and heat of the noontide hour. With brilliant light striking down between the green crests of the pine branches, the black fleeces against the cool grey shadows were of the texture of velvet toned to the deepest purple.

The goatherd sat in the shade of the willows, put his hand within his tunic and raised to his lips a cluster of Pandean pipes. The scene was complete and motionless, as if waiting the romantic entrance of a complementary Sulamith to this orchard of Arcady, watered by a living spring from the heart of Libanus. Would she appear with the timorous footfall of a young gazelle between the clefts of the rocks, her long white veil drawn timidly over her face, allowing the mellow lantern of one dark eye to shine forth in search of him whom her soul loveth?

Has her watching heart already heard the plaintive piping of Pan's music from the distant hill, and into the melody woven the words, "O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock and feed the kids beside the shepherd's tents"?

And will she make response in note of sweet distress and entreaty, as each descending foot-trip brings her nearer to the garden enclosed?

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: why should I be as one that is veiled by the flocks of thy companions?"

But the only sound that carried down from the sun-laved peaks was the tinkling clang of a second bell, and in another moment the breathless solitude was again broken by the down-rush of another flock of goats in numbers excelling the first. The visionary scene from the idyll of love, that is endowed with the secret of perpetual life by the alchemy of eastern sunlight, was instantly blotted out.

This was the Golden Age of Saturn! Pan sat under the trees, and his satyrs were hastening to the trysting-place of the sylvan deities in readiness for the forthcoming revels. With what fever of thirst they thrust their faces into the pool of invitation, and shook the dripping moisture from their shimmering beards!

The demon of unrest drove them hither and thither, up the rocks, down the glen, over the grass eagerly scenting, boldly inquiring, while the respective goatherds cried to their dogs in angry impatience, as each strove to hinder by hot pursuit the confusing of one flock with the other. At the end of a scene of wildest confusion the latest comers were driven into a massed foregathering on the opposite slope, where they likewise, as did the first flock, subsided into recumbent postures of slumberous ease, forming a glittering carpet of black outspread on a sandstone floor.

The goatherds and youths made a brilliant circle of colour under the willows, with primitive food of the ancients set out before them. They tore into finger-shreds the round cakes of flat native bread,

and dipped these into a cup of love, consisting of a bowl of foaming milk freshly drawn from a protesting unit of the herd. Grapes, transparently gold and green, picked from a neighbouring vineyard, completed a meal that would have reflected no discredit on Spartan asceticism or the refined palates of the dwellers on Parnassus.

The spirit of fancy, evoked by contemplation of the satyr-faced beasts, examined the network of symbolism which holds the name and image of the goat imprisoned as closely as the cocoon of the silkworm encloses the chrysalis. The fauns and satyrs, half goats, half men, were attendants on Bacchus, god of vineyards, which nowhere bear more tender grapes, yielding a goodly smell, than in the hills of Lebanon and the fertile places of Palestine, where flocks of goats abound in their tens of thousands. Pan himself, the patron of shepherds, the god of flocks and herds, is represented with goats' legs, and two horns on his head. Beelzebub, the Philistine god of flies, figures in symbolism as a goat, and in tradition the evil element, all that is of Mephistophelean nature, is accounted goat-like.

No fitter setting for a Walpurgis Night could be found than this same glen with the countless symbols of the element of evil, half human, half bestial, crowding the rocks and banks which were themselves cast by Nature's moulding in grotesque and phantasmagoric confusion. And if the introduction of evil into a universe planned to good alone opened a door through which Sorrow crept into the world, surely a light is thrown

upon the derivation of the word "tragedy," or *tragædia*, and also suggests the fundamental reason why a goat should have been the prize of the tragic choirs of ancient Greece.

The seal to the symbolism attached to goats handed down by tradition seems to have been given through the Divine mouthpiece, which affirmed, "And He shall set the sheep on His right hand but the goats on the left." Words that perpetuate the mandate of the Judaic dispensation: "The goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness."

The scapegoat for the sins of others!

Yet still the sun streams its rays on the velvet fleeces, the thirst of the goat has been quenched. Happiness, or at least a neutral contentment, lulls the descendants of the scapegoat into tolerance of their lot.

CHAPTER VI

A SECRET RELIGION

RELIGION has created between the Syrians of the Lebanon a gulf of separation as impassable as many of the deep ravines which yawn between the precipitous mountain-cliffs of their beautiful highlands. A certain number of the villages crowning the craggy summits, clinging to the sunny slopes, or nestling on vine-bedecked foot-hills, are inhabited exclusively by Syrians who belong either to one religious sect or the other; but there are also many villages and whole districts where people of conflicting creeds live together in peace, though the condition of peace may, nevertheless, be better described as one of armed neutrality which the simplest of quarrels is cause sufficing to convert to open warfare.

Of these various religious sects and people, divided, broadly speaking, into Druses and Maronites (who are again subdivided), it is the Druses who provoke inquiry and pique curiosity. It is not so much a question of their original personality or simple yet distinctive garb as the fact that they are a people who possess a secret religion that was absolutely unfathomable and a mystery to all outsiders for eight hundred years.

It is a religion that has always been a subject of curious inquiry. People have even risked their lives in making attempts to intrude into the secret meetings of the Druses. It was only the plundering of their khalweh (the places of worship) during the conquest of Syria by Ibrahim Bey in 1838 that first threw light on the mysteries of their religion. Then, as now, there were certain centres of Druse activity, and from Hasbeya —one of their chief strongholds—at the foot of Mount Hermon, some soldiers took away a number of sacred books which they had discovered in the khalweh.

From these books, which eventually made their way to European libraries and were in part translated, a certain, though indefinite, knowledge of the Druse doctrines has been gleaned, but their great tendency towards symbolism still leaves much of their true nature uninterpreted.

The religion was founded upon Zoroastrian principles at the court of the Fatemite sovereign, Hâkem Biamrillah, the mad Khalif of Egypt who reigned from 996 to 1020 A.D., and, like the other rulers of his dynasty, assumed a hostile attitude towards El-Islam. Two Persian priests of his entourage, El-Dorazy and Hamzeh, both of the Batemite or Mystic Sect, declared Khalif Hâkem to be the tenth incarnation of the Deity. El-Dorazy preached this belief to the people, insisting at the same time upon the worship due to the Khalif.

To prove the Khalif's divinity he embodied his new creed in a treatise which he read publicly in the chief mosque of Cairo before an assembled multitude. The

result of his audacity has two stories attached to it. One states that his audience, infuriated with indignation, killed him on the spot. The second story declares that Khalif Hâkem rescued him from his perilous position, and had him secretly conveyed to Syria. Here the Batemites, expelled from Persia, had settled in Wadi-et-Teim, the valley which separates Mount Hermon from the southern extremity of the Lebanon range, and has always been the headquarters of the Druse sect. The Khalweh-el-Biyâd, a short distance from Hasbeya in the Wadi-et-Teim, is their central shrine of worship to this day.

Hamzeh, the second Persian priest, assumed the mantle of El-Dorazy without delay. He undermined his predecessor's influence to such an extent that the Druses, though deriving their name from El-Dorazy himself, disown any connection with him. His name does not once appear in the Druse catechism, which yet declares Hamzeh to be the greatest and most beautiful of God's creations, and the embodiment of the "Universal Intelligence."

Meanwhile Khalif Hâkem claimed for himself the divinity taught by El-Dorazy and Hamzeh, and pretended to know the secrets of all his people. Many were the extravagances he committed, and subsequently, through the plotting of his sister, Sitt Mullock, he came to a tragic end. Two slaves were sent to lie in ambush on a hill to which Hâkem frequently rode on a white donkey with two attendants only, that he might there meditate in secret.

The slaves killed the Khalif, and then left his garments all buttoned and fastened in their proper order as though the body had slipped miraculously through them. The corpse they took to the sister's palace, where it was privately buried.

Hamzeh, who had not desisted from propagating the doctrine of Hâkem's divinity during the Khalif's reign, refused to render the same worship to the new Khalif Ali, who was Hâkem's son. He declared that this transference of faith was an impossibility, as Hâkem, their first Lord and master, their God and Lord, was not dead. He had only disappeared from the earth to test the faithfulness of his followers, said Hamzeh, in explanation of his attitude. He then produced a book written on the subject of Hâkem's disappearance, which he declared he had found attached to the door of the chief mosque. In the Druse catechism the questions are asked :

"What did Ali do when our Lord Hâkem disappeared?"

"He sat on the throne and said, 'I am the son of Hâkem ; worship me as you worshipped my father!' But the people made reply, 'Our Lord Hâkem was never born, and he has no children.'"

"Did Ali then ask, 'Am I a foundling?'"

"Yes, and Hamzeh answered, 'It is you who have said it, and therefore witness to yourself.'"

At once Ali renounced this new religion of his father's which accorded no honour to himself, and then vented his exasperation in hot persecution of the Druses. All who were able fled to Wadi-et-Teim, and to

Damascus; doctrines and followers entirely disappeared from Egypt, and the religion took firm root in the Lebanon.

The Batemites had evolved their creed from old religions by a system of allegorisation and symbolism, attaching to every outward object a mystical interpretation, as well as to the readings of the Koran. In comparing Batemite and Druse creeds there is so much similarity, through their derivation from the same source, that a fusion of religious doctrines is imagined to have taken place when the persecuted followers of Hâkem settled in the Wadi-et-Teim.

The sacred books of the Druses are six in number, containing one hundred and eleven treatises written principally by Hamzeh in imitation of the Koran, but decidedly inferior in diction and matter. These were kept secret, and are still only allowed to be read by the religious heads of the people.

In these books are unfolded the doctrines of the Druse religion, based on the principle of dualism—the darkness and light, or Ormuz and Ahriman of the Persians. The two principles of good and evil, lightness and darkness, are said to manifest themselves in successive human forms which are accounted phantom appearances, assumed in order to prove to man the reality of the divine existence or Being.

The Khalif Hâkem was declared to be the tenth manifestation of God in the flesh. Hamzeh, his prophet, was the embodiment of the Universal Intelligence which emanated from God and was pure light as opposed to

gross darkness; he was the true Messiah and had three kindred spirits—the will, the purpose, and the word. In the days of Christ these kindred spirits of the incarnation of pure light were John, Matthew, and Mark. They were called Ismael, Mohammed-el-Kelmi, and Bahr-ed-deen when Hamzeh lived. The three Evangelists are also called "the men of wisdom" in the Druse catechism because they forewarned and preached the continuance of the true Christ in the person of Hamzeh.

The opposing principle of darkness or evil they discovered in the prophet Mahomet, the kindred spirits of evil were known to men in human form as Ali Ibn Abu Taleb, Abu-Bekr, Omar, and Othman. With every incarnate manifestation of God there have appeared on earth the Universal Intelligence and his spirits of light and truth, and also the devil with his evil spirits of darkness. At the great judgment-day they will all appear together.

"Satan was once a beloved servant of God," says the catechism, "but he would not yield obedience to Hamzeh, the highest of all pashas, so God cursed him and drove him out of the garden."

The glory and wonder of his oneness is the prominent idea attached to the Deity—in fact, the Druses call themselves Unitarians, and often apply the term Unitarianism to their religion. But the only doctrine which they acknowledge, and likewise uphold openly, is that of transmigration of souls. They believe that the population of the world has always been the same since

the creation : for every body a soul, for every created soul a body, in order that when a man dies his soul may migrate into a body born at that same moment into the world. The world was peopled with different races at one and the same time, all of diverse tongues and occupied with pursuits of various nature, as in the present age of man. Nothing has changed their belief.

"How do the spirits return to their bodies?" asks the catechism.

"Know this, that when a man dies, another is born, and thus exists the world," comes in reply.

They have a name for this doctrine which implies the casting off of one shirt and putting on another. Before entertaining a visitor of whose religion they have entertained no previous knowledge they will place two pots before him, one empty and the other full of water. If the stranger pours the water from the full vessel into the empty one, his action is taken as a sign that he is, at any rate, a believer in the doctrine of transmigration. They welcome him as a brother in the faith.

In support of this belief they always quote the words of Christ concerning John the Baptist and Elijah, also the question, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

But no true Druse, they are convinced, can be born outside the pale of his own religion. Their souls travel from one Druse body to another, prosperous or wretched, according to the manner in which they have ruled their conduct in the previous existence. This theory does not contradict another belief of the average modern

Druse that the souls of their best men are reborn in China, for they think that China is inhabited by people professing the same religion. They say, too, that they have co-religionists in both India *and* China, an idea that must date back to the distant ages when Zoroaster propagated his system in India.

Matter is eternal, therefore the world will last for ever; this is another belief. Their consummation of happiness will begin with the re-appearance of Hâkem, when he comes hereafter to judge the world. Between his first appearance and expected advent they calculate a period of nine hundred years. These nine centuries have already run their course. The Druses still wait in suspense for the coming of their Messiah.

"What is the day of judgment?"

"The day when he will come again as man, and rule in the world with fire and sword."

"When shall it be?"

"That is a secret, but the signs will appear."

"What are the signs?"

"The changing of kingdoms and the overthrowing of Islam by Christianity."

Any war in which Christian powers engage the Moslem Empire is considered by the Druses as a forerunner of the good future in store for them. The books prophesy that the Christians, after wresting Jerusalem from Islam rule, will march towards Mecca, where they will be joined by an Abyssinian, called John, who will be an incarnation of Satan, with a great army of Christian soldiers. During the conflict arms

will suddenly be suspended by the appalling tidings that the Lord Hâkem, with Hamzeh and the spirits of light and truth, are advancing from China with a vast army.

Peace between the Christians and Moslems will at once follow this announcement, both factions surrendering to the supremacy of the Druse Hâkems. Then will come the day of judgment by fire and sword, followed by an earthquake and great storm, which will lay waste the plain of Mecca, destroying all unbelievers.

After this destruction "they shall be born again," instructs the catechism, "and he shall rule according to his will," giving to the Druses, his faithful followers, power, authority, wealth, with the position of kings, princes, and pashas.

The Moslems will be transformed into dogs with painted clothing, and will be paid twenty dinars[1] a year. The Christians are to be in a miserable state, bare-footed, half-naked, carriers of water and fuel for the bath and oven; the left-hand sleeve of their garment will be painted lead-colour and tied behind them. A black glass ring will hang in their ears, an ornament that shall burn them in summer and freeze them in winter. A tax will be imposed upon every person.

The Jews will not be cursed to so great an extent as other infidels, the catechism informs us, because they are a nation formed under Moses, son of Imram,

[1] An old Eastern coin of gold.

who did not profess to be a prophet, or to emulate Hâkem, but was simply a man of famous knowledge, leading his people by personal wisdom, teaching them all that which he feigned to be told by his Creator.

"What will become of his followers when our Hâkem comes?"

"Our Lord, most excellent and mighty, will make them his clerks and book-keepers. They shall be naked and useless, but given necessary food, for our Ruler and Prophet appeared on Mount Sinai as a muleteer with a thousand camels, which made it lawful for us to kill and eat their camels any day we like. Because the Jews were fit to see our Hâkem, he will not be so cruel to them as to others."

Some worshippers they liken to green grass, that is worthless when it is old. When their bodies are destroyed at the judgment-day, their spirits, being unable to assume a new tabernacle of flesh, will disperse into space.

The principal idea of the average intelligent Druse, touching the Christian religion, connects itself with the identity of Christ. He says there were two Christs, the false and the true Christ. The real Christ was numbered among the disciples, by name Salman-el-Farsee, or, as other Druse authorities state, Lazarus, who was an incarnation of Hamzeh. It was he who taught the Gospel doctrines to the Christian's Christ, and put hatred into his heart against the Jews, so that in anger they crucified Him. After He was buried the Druse Christ stole His body from the tomb, and this action gave rise to the story of the Resurrection.

The reason given for this concealment of the Druse Christ in the person of one of the disciples is somewhat vague: "He meant thereby to redeem the united Druses by the religion of Christ and *let no one know it.*"

"Who is He then who entered the room while the doors were shut after having risen from the dead?"

"He is the living Christ, who is Hamzeh, the servant of our Lord Hâkem, and his angel."

The writers of the four gospels are spoken of as the four wives of Hamzeh, because their attitude towards him was one of subjection and obedience. Jesus, the son of Mary, is said to be neither God nor Prophet, but an eloquent man, who through His miracles and teaching founded a religion which should in reality belong to the Druse Hamzeh. The true Gospel is that which contains, not the sayings of Jesus, but of Salman-el-Farsee, who was really Hamzeh.

It was at the command of Hamzeh, given in the sacred books, that the secret of the Druse religion was to be strictly guarded. The wisdom therein was not to be revealed because it contained the secret wisdom of Hamzeh, whereby comes the salvation of souls and the life of the spirit. When they are tasked with the reproach that this reason for secrecy implies a desire that none should be saved except their own sect, their reply comes glibly, "The call is ended, the door is shut, and he that has believed will continue to believe, he that has not believed will never believe."

A reason more akin to truth may be found in the fact that secrecy veils their opinions of other religions. They live under Moslem rule, have always done so more or less, and would probably have been exterminated long ago had the followers of El-Islam known that the Druse religion denounces Mahomet as the incarnation of evil, which had previously revealed itself successively in Noah, Moses, and Jesus, all of whom the Moslems revere, naming them God's prophets and faithful servants. Far from condemning the religion of Islam, the Druses are instructed by their sacred writings to profess any religion that is the most widely promulgated and believed, whether it be the Moslem or Christian.

"Follow it openly, *but keep me in your hearts*" (the italics are mine), is a saying attributed to Hâkem, to which he also attached a parable: "He who wears a garment, be it black, white, or red, his body remains the same whether diseased or whole; the garment does not change his body. Other religions are like the different garments and your religion is as the body. So keep it in your heart, and wear that which is more convenient, and pretend to be of the religion which gives you rest as much as you desire."

To ensure the safe-keeping of their secrets the Druses have always been divided into classes: the akkals, or initiated; the juhhals, or uninitiated, who are not admitted to the religious meetings held in the khalwehs. There are two degrees of akkals: those who after two years' probation are simply initiated, and akkals of high degree of sanctity who give themselves wholly

to sacred duties. There are certain fixed ceremonies through which the novice must pass before he becomes initiated and counted one of the akkals. He is also given figs by the head akkal which he has to eat.

"O man, dost thou believe that thou takest religion by figs," he is asked, "and so become one of the united Druses?"

"Yes, I believe."

He is then instructed in the rules and secrets of the religion, and has to sign his name to a covenant composed in the following form:

"In the name of our Lord Hâkem, the only God who is indispensable, who was never created, nor born, and is not to be equalled, I, —— the son of ——, have resolved to put my soul and body, my wives, children, and property, all that belongs to me, my right and my left, under the yoke of subjection to my Lord Hâkem, the most high, the ruler of rulers, the Imam, the Almighty. I have given him myself and promise to trust in him, and I confess the true confession, and witness before my imam (head-man or head akkal) and my fellow-playmates that I deny every other religion that has been or will be. I admit the unity and the will, and that there is no God worshipped in heaven or earth except my Lord Hâkem, the High and in his works, and he is the ruler by his word alone, and my strength and confidence is in him. To him I commend all my affairs; I hate all that opposes his service, his worship, and obedience, and have taken this vow upon myself— in health bodily and mentally, of my own free will

without compulsion, and testify to the shepherds, and to the rest of the prophets, Amen. Written in the month —— in the year —— of our Lord Hâkem, who avenges himself of backsliders through the word of our Lord Hamzeh."

This initiation imposes strict rules of conduct and dress upon the novice. He is to be courteous, patient, self-respectful, good-tempered, and of peaceful mien; he is to refrain from evil-speaking, to speak kindly to all men that are brothers in the faith. Tobacco and spirituous drinks are forbidden indulgences.

The head akkals (iwazid) are not allowed to engage in trade, but they may cultivate their own property for a livelihood. Their deportment is an exaggerated type of that imposed upon the simple initiates. They assume an air of abject humility, are extremely cautious in the choice of language, immediately correcting the least exaggeration of speech. Their standard of morality is high. In all matters the will of the All-Powerful supersedes personal desires; illness and trouble find them resigned and of a stoical endurance.

Their charity and self-denial are exercised towards co-religionists only; under other circumstances self-interest may come into play, hypocrisy being the veil their religion allows them to don on principle. The chief business of their lives consists in reading and learning by heart the one hundred and eleven treatises of Hamzeh.

Unlike the Mohammedans of the same degree, the akkals teach the women of their family the secrets of their religion, and also give them instruction in reading

and writing. For this they have Hamzeh's authority in that he bids them give instruction to their sisters in the faith, "but let them be secluded from you by a partition, and not lift up their voices."

The khalweh, the Druse place of worship, is generally situated on a hill-summit, or some isolated, elevated spot, and is a simple square structure of stone with a cupola. It contains mats for the floor, perhaps a table, and usually a chest of some kind in which are kept the sacred books in manuscript. Of ornamentation there is no trace, for they will not tolerate any form of the idolatry which they say is displayed in the images and pictures filling the Maronite churches.

The worshippers meet every Thursday evening for study of the sacred books. Thursday is the Eastern Friday, and is chosen by the Druses for their gatherings in commemoration of the Friday when in the year 1020 A.D. Khalif Hâkem vanished from the earth. It is stated by an Oriental authority[1] on Eastern religions that the singers of the assembly chant passages from the sacred books, and that at the end of the meeting they sing epic poems written by their own poets on the subject of Hâkem's re-appearance. This fine prayer is quoted as a specimen of their strain of thought: and religious feeling.

"Praise to thee, O thou whose grace is invisible! Praise to thee who hast the loftiest names! Praise to thee whose grace is inimitable! I pray thee, O God, the most generous of hearers, through those spirits who

[1] Wortabet: *Religions of the East.*

submitted themselves to thee, to grant me purity of heart, prayer in my tongue, pardon in my end, a sufficiency of righteous provision and a translation to a pure and holy tabernacle, not to the tabernacle of a wretched infidel. I pray not for the reversal of thy decrees, but that grace may accompany thee. O thou whose commands none can put away, and whose decrees none can frustrate, thou art the high and the great one!"

After the women have left, as well as the ordinary akkals, the superior akkals remain in the khalweh alone, to discuss the political affairs of the world, which, they are firmly convinced, are bound up with the welfare of the Druses and the coming of Hamzeh and Hâkem. The whole Druse community throughout the Lebanon, Hauran, and that of Mount Carmel is closely connected by means of a skilfully worked network of inter-communications between the various villages and places long established as centres of activity, such as Hasbeya and Baaklene. By these methods, unremittingly exercised, their action has always been concerted on every occasion where it was considered necessary to call it into movement.

They have a state question which invariably they put to a stranger to discover whether he be a true or a false Druse:

"Are there farmers in your part of the country who plant the seed of the myrobalan?" (a fruit resembling a prune).

If the reply is, "They plant it in the hearts of believers," the stranger is welcomed as a brother Druse.

The Druses of to-day are watching from their highland homes the signs of the times with almost bated breath. Any threatened broil between Turkish and European Powers, the war with China, the Boer War, the war of Russia with Japan, have all been signs that to them are pregnant with meaning. They look upon them as forerunners of the great future towards which the whole Druse race presses with a vivid expectancy.

The great fervour with which they distinguish the English nation from other Christian nations reveals their secret opinion that at the present crisis in political history England is the ruling, the dominant Power of the world. To an Englishman the Druse gives the most cordial greeting; he hails him as brother, laying two fingers together with the words "Sawa, sawa!" to denote a family similarity between the two races.

With self-contained and confident assurance they wait for the transformation of their present undefined position among the peoples of the world to one of established power and distinction. This desired metamorphosis will at once follow that glorious day which ushers in the coming of their Lord Hâkem from the districts of the Hauran, when he will appear "with great power, with soldiers and fine horses, for the sun's rays will be hidden in the space of seven days' walk from the soldiers' lances, and his pashas will be around him, and blessed is he who will be worthy to be the ground under his feet."

But the nine hundred years of the prophecy are past and over. Hope deferred bringeth disillusion in

its wake. When that hour of disillusion breaks upon the Druse nation, may it not be the signal for the redemption of the united Druses by the religion of the real Christ, the Christ of the Christians, to whom they have so nearly approached through means of the simulcra created by one of the foreshadowed false Christs, who should be so strong in their generation and time that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect?

CHAPTER VII

BARUK CEDARS

INTO the daydream of the siesta penetrated a shrill cry and then the frantic squawking of a hen trying to escape its doom. Alas! the cries of misery resolved themselves into the dying protest of the unfortunate fowl I had ordered for a picnic on the morrow. I had to be callous and close my ears, for meat was at a discount at that moment, the muleteers from Beyrout, through one cause and another, not having turned up with the usual stores at the time expected.

What a welcome sound was always the jingling, tinkling sound of the bells of the mule-train from Beyrout! They arrived at all hours and any hour of the day or night, ringing their approach from the muleteer track while still far below in the valley. They sounded the advent of letters and of the printed matter which still kept us in touch with that remote world lying on the other side of the lofty mountain-ridges piled sky-high on the western horizon. To the peal of those bells vibrated in response all the chords of heart and mind. The present lost its keen interest of novelty. Only the bells mattered, as they rang in the messages from home and news of the country of home.

The weather was simply perfect; clear and not too

warm, with beautiful floating clouds ever travelling with stately measure over the soft blue of the sky. The grapes were at their best, the vineyards all along the terraces full of fruit and the busy ingatherers. We were to make an expedition to the cedars of Baruk, which ran along the ridge of the highest mountain-ridge above the valley of Baruk, half-way on the road to the palace at Bet-ed-Din. We were to be a party of four, and in consideration for me—a mere rider of donkeys—Miss Drummond Hay, Mr. X., and the artist were to ride donkeys also.

We ought to have started at seven o'clock, but the lunch (in spite of the tragic preparations of the previous day) was not ready, and there was a delay about saddles, always a difficulty in Syria to those undowered with their own. Miss Drummond Hay's saddle would not adapt itself to the donkey's back, and after much distressed action on the part of groom and coachman, who seemed to think it was a truly appalling provocation of destiny for their young mistress to condescend to ride a donkey instead of her own beautiful thoroughbred, the difficulty was solved by Miss Drummond Hay's decision to ride a native saddle, which meant no pummel and no stirrups, but a miniature mountain-ridge off which it is the easiest thing in the world to glide swiftly to mother earth unless bestriding its massive backbone in the fashion of Semiramis. An elegant rug was thrown over the whole, and without further delay Miss Drummond Hay mounted her Syrian donkey after the fashion of Englishwomen.

The muleteer brought my animal round by the road—for I had taken the direct route on foot through the mulberry-grove upon viewing from afar the difficulty of the saddle—and we all started, a quartette of riders, followed by two wild, romantic-looking muleteers and a baggage-mule for conveying wraps, provisions, and a large jar of drinking-water. After keeping to the road for about a mile we cut across the foot-hills, and began to ascend the mountains by as steep and rugged a track as one unacquainted with Syrian, and especially Lebanon, byways can imagine.

Seven miles of circuitous ascent ensued, the plucky little beasts tackling the climb without lagging, and only freed from their burdens at one point, ten minutes before reaching the first cedars, when the slope became almost perpendicular. It had taken the space of three hours to ascend from the road to the summit. Before we started a high wind had begun to blow, and on the heights every variety of weather gave us welcome. Thunder, lightning, rain, sunshine and mist, all in rapid succession, but the spot in which we rested for a time, after the laborious ascent, under the thick, roof-like spreading branches of large cedars was dry and sheltered, while the elements rioted at will outside the magic circle.

The muleteers, diligent and untiring as ever, lighted a fire at a little distance away while we spread the lunch beneath the rafters of cedars with the fragrance of the "smell of Lebanon" exhaling its incense from the rain-sprinkled boughs. But the forest kept calling to us from without, making subtle appeal in the melancholy

soughing of the wind through the yielding, creaking branches, in the aromatic breath of its undergrowth, the fresh earthy smell of the moist, spine-strewn soil.

We rose and passed through the grove as if treading on enchanted ground. Many of the cedars gave the appearance of great age, others were of pygmean stature, gnarled and rough as though prematurely arrested in growth by a blast of unkind fate when the sap was young in their sturdy limbs. Everywhere lay scattered heaps of boulders and great rocks as if hurled together by an earthquake, the débris of some temple of old, or of a highland fortress in the days when there were giants in the earth.

A weird sense of mystery lurked in the vistas opening out between the trees. For a brief moment I seemed to be gazing at that ancient wood wherein was once, and only once, found the golden bough. There were the dim dells of shadows, half veiled in the floating mist, dipping dreamily between the rocks, overhung by drooping branches, and all the cedars and the shrubs around seemed to be pressing earthwards in concealment of that "pliant twig" and the precious leaf.

It was but a momentary illusion, thrust quickly out of mind by the sense of reality conveyed in the recollection that we were wandering among some of the few lonely survivals of the famous forests of Lebanon. Faith and imagination wrestled hard in the effort of realising that these were actually relics of forests once so vast that the high stature of their cedars formed masts for the ships of Tyre and Sidon, and furnished wood

CEDARS OF LEBANON.

for a kingly palace for David; forests once so prolific that after enduring the ravages made by the thirty thousand hewers of King Solomon and the countless workmen of Hiram, King of Tyre, there was still a residue of their pristine glory to furnish cedarwood for the building of the second temple, under Zerubbabel! that temple which stirred up such conflicting emotions of retrospection and anticipation at the laying of the foundations that the noise of the shouts of joy could not be discerned from the noise of the weeping of the people.

Those were the days when for a man to be compared to a cedar of Lebanon was a token of the highest appreciation. "The Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs . . . nor was any tree in the garden of God like unto him."

And now though the blight of time and of man's touch had reduced these grand woods to a few isolated groves the glamour of past associations and their present forlorn beauty appealed strongly to both heart and sight. Such glimpses of wonderful valleys and billows of mountain-ridges, such nearness of great precipices and magical effects of mist and sun, I had never seen as in wandering over that rugged height, through the chapparal of the little cedar-forest. Grey and green were the prevailing colours in the foreground, with purple and veiled blues, and curious rosy effects on the mist in the distant prospects revealing themselves like glimpses of distant fairyland through the openings in the trees.

The artist had gone off with one of the muleteers for guide to gain a high point from which he could look over the plain of Bekaa towards Djebel-es-Sheikh towering over the opposite hill-range. He returned enchanted with the effects he had seen, in spite of being overtaken by a vigorous rain-shower. It was the same view which we were enabled to see at a future date from another point of the Baruk range of hills. It will be touched upon later instead of now, as the three of the party who explored the forest did not climb to the ridge, but returned to the first shelter of the thick-boughed cedar, where the remaining muleteer had prepared a daïs of rocks overspread with rugs for our resting-place.

Again the smoke of a wood fire filtered bluely through the rafters of the trees. Even the glow of the flame was welcome in advance of the warming draught of tea, for the rain-showers had cooled the air; we were about 6,000 feet above sea level, and no longer looked askance at the wraps which prevoyant advice had prevailed upon us to bring very reluctantly from the warmer latitudes below.

The artist came into view, and no sooner had he partaken of the stimulating cup than we started by another route homeward. It was a sheer climb down the face of the mountain to the village of Baruk, only possible to perform on foot. The donkeys led the way and we crawled gingerly after them, having to guard warily every step downwards, and becoming so fatigued that an hour passed before we reached the foot of that precipitous hillside.

Though an extremely bad riding track was still between us and the village, we mounted our beasts and stumbled over a mile of it before emerging on the high-road. This way back had its advantages, as the remainder of the route was on the carriage road, instead of retracing that slow and tedious climb of the morning. We stopped at the river of Baruk to enable our donkeys to have a drink, and mine insisted upon quenching his thirst from the deep centre of the stream. A panic, assisted by mischievous suggestions of the whole party, seized upon me, that the otherwise well-conditioned beast would also take it into his head to lie down in that deliciously refreshing spot, a prospect that was devoid of charm for the rider.

Fortunately the other donkeys, its boon companions, took upon themselves the responsibility of heading for home. Off they raced on the flat; and out of the water waded and splashed my dilatory beast in haste to follow so excellent an example, and then they all raced one another, for the rest of the way, so glad were the animals to have their noses set at last in the right direction.

The visits of ceremony that are exchanged upon the arrival of people of distinction in the towns of Syria are as scrupulously performed in the villages, and nowhere with more appearance of national etiquette than in the Lebanon. When the wife of our Consul-General returned the visits which had been paid her by the wives of the representative Druse and Maronite families in the village, she kindly invited me to accompany her and her daughter,

together with the English wife of a Syrian gentleman living in the same locality.

To spare Lady Drummond Hay the fatigue of visiting many houses separately, the women of several families collected together in the house of that one which was the chief in the respective classes of village society. The first visit was paid upon the humble fellahin families.

The party of women who had assembled together came out of the house to meet us with cries of welcome, seizing our hands, pressing them to forehead and breast, and conducting us with much excitement into the low-raftered living-room. There were a few borrowed chairs placed within for the guests, with a low table covered with flowers fronting them; for the entertainers there were outstretched rolls of matting, and a variety of cushions and small plain mattresses. We sat there in state while glasses of coloured sherbet were handed round, followed by the usual diminutive cups of sweet Arab coffee. Many questions were put eagerly by one and the other, but the majority of the women seemed contented to do nothing but gaze with adoring eyes on the wife and daughter of their beloved Inglizi Consul.

To a house at the extreme end of the village raised above the other houses, showing the pillared recessed entrance, deep and cool-looking as an Italian loggia, the next visit was paid. Here were gathered together the women of the better-class Druse villagers, the hostess being the wife of the richest Druse peasant (or farmer) of the village and vicinity. Here we were greeted in

the court with showers of rose-water, a regular baptism which made us unpleasantly damp, and quite took the curl out of feathers and hair. It came in deluges right and left, over the walls, from behind the doors, round every corner we turned, alternately with puffs of aromatic, sweet-smelling smoke from censers waved under our noses and to and fro on all sides, to the accompaniment of the shrill, ear-breaking ululations of joyous welcome.

We passed through the loggia into the room arranged for the reception with handsome rugs spread out on the floor and narrow divans lining the walls. The whole company sat down after the hostess, handsome, calm, and dignified as a queen in her flowing drapery and white veil, had received her distinguished visitor with the due honours of ceremony.

From this house we passed on to the Protestant and Maronite families, with but small distinctions of etiquette to mark the difference between the various communities. On a succeeding day we visited the mudir of the village, who had invited several of the chief Druse *ladies* to receive with himself and family the visit of Lady Drummond Hay.

For those not as well acquainted with the mode of government in the Lebanon and other parts of Syria as travellers who have spent some time in the country, it might be well here to explain that each vilayet or province is divided into so many departments or sanjaks, presided over by a mutesarrif; every sanjak is again divided in what are called kâimmakâmliks, under the jurisdiction of a kâimmakâm. Now the mudirs are the small governors

who are at the head of the sub-divisions of the kâimmakâmliks.

It was the mudir of this district of Lebanon upon whom the call of ceremony was being paid. He was of an ancient, very noble family, though now, as latest descendant of his race, he had to earn his livelihood as a tinker. Any one who looked less like a tinker I never saw. He was a handsome, intelligent man, immaculately fresh-looking and imposing in his Druse costume, and even equal to the accomplishment of speaking a little English.

CHAPTER VIII

PILGRIMS OF THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

A STRANGE silence reigned within the house. A glance through the window intensified the depressing influence. Even the village presented a desolate aspect, and the amphitheatre of hills, rising ridge upon ridge into far-away lofty summits, glared unsympathetic in the blinding sunlight.

Far across the valley a black object was moving on the road which clasped the precipitous mountain-side; and with its creeping advance the blankness of heart and mind became acute. The object of vision was a carriage, in which were seated two persons whose sojourn in that little Syrian pension in the heart of the Lebanon Mountains had stirred into life so many rich thoughts, connecting a visionary golden future with seeds sown in a strenuous past, that their departure created a proportionate void.

The names of these two persons had haunted my ears for weeks. On the journey to and from Jerusalem constant inquiry had been made whether I had met them at one point or another. An inscription in the visitors' book at a Jaffa hotel first awakened interest concerning these two well-known personalities :

"17 mars, Hyacinthe Loyson, prêtre catholique, et Madame Hyacinthe Loyson, de Paris à Jerusalem. Pèlerins de l'Église de l'Avenir."

Pilgrims of the Church of the Future! What lengthening vistas lay mirrored to imagination in that phrase, conjured up by the signature of a man who had been, and still was, a saint militant of his age and country!

Though visiting the Holy City at the same time, our paths did not then converge. The first evening of my return to Jaffa, I was told it was a pity my arrival had not been timed a day earlier on account of an interesting conference held the preceding day by Madame Loyson, the wife of the celebrated Frenchman, Père Hyacinthe.

"Upon what subject?" was my immediate inquiry.

"The education of women in the Orient," was the reply, "and the importance of establishing a bond of union between the women of the East and the women of the West."

Jaffa residents at the dinner-table expressed admiration of the scheme, and the deep necessity for some such exploitation of progress in a country where the majority of women are still bound to a life of seclusion and stagnation of mental competency by the iron hand of custom and strict tenets of their religion. It transpired during conversation that Père and Madame Loyson, now guests at the Coptic Monastery, were to take their departure from Jaffa on the following day.

It was a July day glowing with heat. A stiff breeze, hot and suffocating, made an exciting episode of the

passage of our boat through the rocks that guard the Jaffa promontory. Beyond there was a heavy swell, and the movements of the boatmen as they rose to their feet with every pull of the oars through the agitated waves, while echoing the steersman's rhythmic cry to Allah, presented an aspect of such danger-provoking daring that attention was strained until the nose of the boat shot in between the sterns of others lying beside the steamer, and we were passed hand over hand, the boards slipping beneath our feet, across the barrier of boats up the gangway to firm foothold on the deck of the anchored liner.

When I was watching the suspense of other passengers in the transit from shore to ship, my dragoman came to me for permission to introduce me to a lady upon whom he wished to impress the advantage of patronising a particular pension in Beyrout, to which I myself was bound. The pains he had taken to conduct my affairs, so far successfully, deserved this appreciation of his services, and it was in this simple fashion that my introduction to Madame Hyacinthe Loyson was effected.

On the opposite side of the deck I saw a figure, tall and distinguished-looking. She was dressed in a dark grey gown of which the upper part was a tunic suspended from the shoulders in classic folds merging into the flowing outline of the skirt. On her head was a broad-brimmed hat simply trimmed with dark band and a bow of ribbon. The black veil thrown across the crown was tied under the chin and wound carelessly round the throat.

She turned her head with a dignified movement at our approach, revealing a face of strong, even severe, character at first glance. The eyes were dark and penetrating, almost piercing, her brows slightly knitted, the mouth and chin firmly set. The searching, critical look relaxed in less time than it takes to depict into a smile that transfigured the countenance with the effect of sunshine. It beamed with unrestrained hearty goodwill and warmth, seeming to draw the recipient of its graciousness into the immediate circle of confidence and favour. Madame Loyson's voice was decisive, infused with a cheeriness of tone that mellowed the unwavering firmness of speech.

With the interchange of a few words, terse and to the point, the dragoman's mind was set at ease, and for several weeks we were fellow-travellers with two of the most original, finest characters it is possible to encounter on earth. They won involuntary admiration, they stormed our hearts with no effort, no consciousness on their part. It was an effect produced by the living witness to our eyes of a status of noble theory worked into the practical details of daily existence with habitual consistency.

Père Hyacinthe Loyson showed more traces of the sunset of life than his wife. Her dark hair was scarcely sprinkled with grey. His was of silvery hue, fallen away from the massive temple into silken waves of abundant growth round the base of the head. Beneath the strongly marked eyebrows his eyes retained traces of the fire of youth, kindling into activity when discussing the great

subjects of his life-study and work. In repose their gaze was veiled as though wrapped in contemplation of the past, or absorbed in visionary outlook on problems of the future which engrossed his intellect and spirit, all tending to a transformation in religious circles which would consummate the unity of the whole of Christendom.

But the grand old man was temporarily exhausted with the strain of nine months' continuous travelling in the East. The physical drawbacks of incessant change of scene and diet, added to unlimited output of brain and heart coil attending their mission as propagandists, resulted in breakdown. Instead of re-embarking for Europe, the heat of midsummer made it expedient to withdraw to some spot where the enervating fervour could be counteracted by mountain air, and body and mind recuperated by rest and seclusion. The highland village of Lebanon, to which we ourselves were bound, appeared to answer these requirements. But desire to return home after the prolonged absence was a magnet drawing the invalid psychically in the opposite direction. These opposing currents of expediency and inclination resulted in a state of lassitude that increased as distance put the mountain barrier between means of swift transit to the beloved country.

At intervals the strong spirit emerged from the clouds temporarily obscuring it, revealing bright flashes of the colossal intellect, the lofty ideals, the pellucid vision that had held multitudes bound under the spell of a marvellous oratory. As a searchlight these brilliant

interludes cast illumination on the character of the man, disclosing the secret of his influence upon man and environment during a life that stands out in distinctive relief against the mass of mediocre celebrities crowding the nineteenth century.

One of the finest traits possessed by Père Hyacinthe is his simple trust in the good faith of his fellow-creatures. Above suspicion himself, he suspects no man of deceptive intent. Like all true teachers, encouragement, not denunciation, is the keystone of his dealing with his brother man. He lays less stress upon rules from without than upon awakening the sense of possible goodness and greatness from within a man.

A Luther of his century Père Hyacinthe has been called by contemporaries. A reformer in theory and practice is also his wife. Bold to speak in the rightness of a cause, she never hesitates to make effort to set right whatever she believes to be wrong or false. This tendency revealed itself with daily insistence, whether in so small a matter as demonstrating the salutary effect of water-sprinkling in a room or porch glowing with heat, whether in so large a matter as striving to prove to a Roman Catholic or Greek priest the futility of celibacy, or convincing a Moslem that the stability of his race and its future prosperity depend upon the education and general elevation of his womankind. In every case Madame Loyson brings into play the same verve, strong will, and practical sense, doubtless the heritage of her American forefathers.

Her views on all subjects were of powerful cast.

SYRIAN WOMAN OF THE HAURAN.

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She expressed them openly, fearless of their reception, whether her audience was one or many. Not that she had always been able to express openly the subjects nearest her heart.

"Ten years ago, nay five years," she said, in her clear, frank voice, "I would not have had the courage to speak as I do now; but now, thank God, I stand as it were on a mountain-summit, and God is speaking there, the one God who is worshipped alike by the Christian and the Moslem."

She declares herself able to worship in any church under any denomination, even within the walls of a Latin church, if in any place visited she found no Protestant place of worship. The one great God she worshipped was in them all, she said. She had risen above sect, beyond denominational restraint. Her creed is the creed of Sinai: "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me."

In her desire to break down the barrier of sectarianism, she seeks the confidence of those holding religious views opposed to her own.

"I mean to come to your church to-morrow," she has said to a Roman Catholic priest. "I can worship God in every church, and I would like to hear you preach. I like and respect a good sermon; but I give you fair warning, I shall tell you afterwards whereinsoever I disagree with you."

At their next meeting she would point out, in all-amicable discussion, what she accounted wrong doctrine or false reasoning in that particular sermon.

"We are all Christians," she made a point of saying to members of the Greek and Latin Churches, "and Jesus is our Master. Why do we not all return to the same beginning, and practise the same methods by which our Master lived and taught?" To the Moslem, for whom she entertains great respect and toleration, she would say, "We both worship one God. We can unite in the same prayer, 'Our Father which is in heaven.'"

All who profess any creed are striving towards truth, she affirms. Sincerity and devotion are the two important factors in mankind's efforts to win truth. Though prompt to correct where she discerns error, she is ready to gather the frail ones of earth to the shelter of her warm, womanly heart.

"Would you like to be seen walking in Jerusalem with one whose conduct is universally condemned?" asked a notable resident of the Holy City.

"Yes, that I would, and be proud to do what our Master Christ has clearly shown us is the right thing to do," she replied, in her most emphatic tones.

Her undaunted spirit has been proved by all kinds of dangers. She has been lashed to the mast in a storm when crossing the Atlantic in earlier life. In Paris she was in a carriage with her husband surrounded by a raging mob, in momentary dread that in their blind fury he would be killed by a bullet or dagger thrust. Upon no occasion of her life did heart and lips pray with greater reality than in entreaty for release from deadly peril of the life so valuable to the world and herself.

Prayer is, in fact, the great bodyguard of her own strength. Her faith in the fulfilment of sincere petition was profound.

The grandeur of the Lebanon hills encircling the village of Ainzahalta was sympathetic to her because reviving memories of childhood. Though brought up among the hills and forests of New England, and retaining her love for mountains and trees, no longing to revisit the home of her birth was born until she came to Palestine. But when depressed with the enigma of modern Jerusalem, which baffles present efforts of solution, when she came into touch with all that is oldest in the history of man's work in the world, and realised its imperfect accomplishment, nowhere more evident than in the Holy City—then the strings of her whole nature rebounded with unspeakable yearning towards the natural modernity of her native land.

The emotion was but the manifestation of the tendency within her for making all things new, the spirit of reform which appeared to be the motive power of action.

In spite of chief attention being monopolised by care for her husband's health and comfort, her ideas of reform burned with sufficient zeal to excite responsive fire of reflection in minds brought in contact with her own in the locanda and the village. Strong common-sense marked her suggestions. Every day she directed water to be thrown in profusion over the stone flags of the dining-hall and loggia to freshen the arid atmosphere. Toleration of an eccentric "franghi" notion,

not conviction of its efficacy, marked the demeanour of the Syrian maid obeying instructions. She next directed an awning to be hung over the balcony of the hotel to mitigate the blinding glare of the cloudless sky. No material for its construction was at hand.

"It *must* be found," was her reply. Thereupon material was produced and an innovation started by which the changing influx of summer visitors profited to the end of the season. In another couple of days she had caused the stone floor of the hall to be covered at one end with an Eastern rug. Curtains to the glass partition opening on the balcony followed with rapidity. Compared with its first austerity the locanda possessed one homely and clothed corner for tranquil retreat.

Madame Loyson's mind is acutely susceptible to environment. She cannot write or work if there is anything brown in hue near her. The colour disturbs her.

"Just as an artist needs a strong point of colour from which to work, so my mind in working requires a centre of motion—perhaps a picture that appeals to me. When I lift my eyes, I must find something to focus my ideas to help them to flow freely and harmoniously."

The neglected exterior of a group of Druse cottages immediately below the windows of the locanda troubled her orderly mind. From the balcony she suggested to the surprised inmates, through an interpreter, that

they should clear the ground of débris and stones, and bring out stools to sit upon in lieu of squatting on the bare earth.

"One of the first signs of civilisation comes with the idea instilled that people should not crouch on the ground, but have a seat that obliges them to sit upright," she explained later.

A walk through the village, in and out of the tortuous stone-strewn paths, the steep descents and hills, caused her to express desire to converse with the young men of the village, who were at home for the summer vacation from the schools at Beyrout. They were to be reformers, she said, of their own native place. They were invited to a gathering of English-speaking people at the locanda which Madame Loyson had convened in order to explain the mission which, on two separate occasions, had brought her and Père Hyacinthe to the Orient.

The best explanation of this mission is contained in the small pamphlet written by Madame Loyson in 1899, called "Alliance des Femmes orientales et occidentales pour le Progrès des Relations amicales entre les Nations et l'Etablissement de la Paix permanente."

Next day the young Syrians sent a deputy to inquire if Madame Loyson would receive them privately, and explain some definite form in which they could carry out the ideas put before them at the meeting. She received them gladly, told them of Ruskin's road-making, and how it was possible to do practical work

in their own village in the same spirit. The rocky paths could be cleared and the stones piled in heaps, which could again be dispersed at the rainy season to prevent the soil from being washed away with hillside torrents. All the refuse of each hut and house lay in unsavoury profusion outside the doors and walls. Here was another lesson to instil. The young Druse and Maronite blood was fired with enthusiasm to remodel their village. Madame Loyson's zeal for reform was the flint to tinder.

But alas! the time was all too short for the promulgation of the gospel of sweetness and light into this Eastern village. Père Loyson's health did not improve. The rarefied heights of Lebanon were exhausting after the high pressure of travel. It was imperative he should hasten his departure. On the eve of the day of leave-taking he spoke of the power of home-sickness to neutralise the faculty of enjoyment. He was seated on the balcony, the village spread before his gaze with its quaint cube-shaped dwellings and vivid mulberry terraces, all enclosed by the majestic amphitheatre of rolling hills.

"Far from one's country, in a foreign land surrounded by high mountains, many miles from a railroad, is a situation requiring 'beaucoup de courage, et moi, je n'en ai pas à présent; j'ai honte, j'ai beaucoup de honte.' It is childish," he concluded with a smile that touched the heart. It was a confession that the man well named "the lion-hearted" could make and be the deeper revered for his frank admission of the natural yearning

during sickness for country and home. He is now preaching and writing and promulgating his great mission with a vigour and intellectual mastery "as never before," wrote a recent correspondent.

People whose hearts they had won during the two weeks' visit flocked round the carriage to say farewell. Women, picturesque in flowing white veils and classic draped robes, flung themselves in Madame Loyson's path, catching at her dress, her hands, her arms. The wife of the Maronite priest—a woman with grown-up family and children all joining in this sorrow of leave-taking—caught hold of her and kissed her vehemently on both cheeks, while shedding tears which seemed a mute acknowledgment of the link already uniting the women of East and West. And now they were fading from view, the carriage merging into the shadow stealing down the lofty hillside.

"Ships that pass in the night," not ghost-like, silently, but with the clear signal: "Hail to the brotherhood of human souls!" Then onward again with the hope of reunion and anchorage in the great haven that lies beyond these conflicting currents of many creeds and sects.

CHAPTER IX

A DRUSE WEDDING

ONE afternoon I was entertaining some visitors at tea in the lewan when Rosa, the pretty young daughter of our hostess, came in to announce that a couple of Druse women had called at the locanda to invite me to a wedding for that same evening. This news sounded rather exciting, so I lost no time in going out myself to the loggia in order to interview them on the subject with the help of Rosa.

I invited them to enter, using the formula familiar to them. At first they demurred, but finally consented, only for a moment. This did not seem strange, as I reflected they would probably have much to occupy them between now and the evening in preparing for the wedding festival. They kept themselves most carefully veiled, concealing the whole face except one eye, brilliantly dark in its setting of white.

They were invited to take their seat on the divan facing me with the tea-table between, and two ladies who were there with me, both Syrian born of European parentage, kindly acted as interpreters. The invitation was again politely tendered in person, and accepted with the usual exchange of compliment. We did not

hesitate to speculate in English upon the personality and appearance of the two women.

"They are not from this neighbourhood, or they would certainly have known me," remarked a visitor present. "Where do you come from?" she made inquiry.

"We come from Betelun beyond Baruk," said one of the Druse women after a moment's pause.

I ventured to put the question through one of the ladies as to whether they would not unveil for us to speak together in a more friendly and informal manner.

Oh no! that was out of the question, was the hurried reply, for there was a "khowaja" present. The artist was in the room privately making notes of their costumes.

"You will at least show us your dress?" was the next request. We are nothing if not imitative of the native in pushing inquiry in a way little compatible with our own ideas of etiquette either at home or abroad.

For answer they threw back their veils from their whole busts, though still retaining part of it over the face. One of the dresses was of a superior quality to the other, the bodice being of a rich royal-blue velvet fastened with costly clasps and ornamented with big buttons of silver. A deep belt supported the upper skirt, which fell back in front disclosing a bright-hued skirt beneath. A white chemisette of soft folded muslin was slipped beneath the corseted bodice, leaving the firm, full pillar of the neck visible. Bracelets of silver

filigree work and finely wrought circlets clustered thickly on the arms from the wrist to elbow. They seemed women of some standing in their own social world.

Yes, they were both married, and one of them had five children to tend in her home. No, they preferred neither to eat nor drink, not even the cup of tea, which it seemed an act of needless self-denial to refuse. Suddenly they rose and declared time pressed, they must make their farewells to the ladies who had been so amiable. Would these same ladies only confer upon their humble houses in Betelun the unspeakable honour of a visit, all the birds of the air would gather together to sing them songs of welcome.

I went with them to the door, and through to the loggia, where once again I asked if they would unveil, that I might recognise them in their own homes. For a moment they allowed me to look upon their faces, enwreathed with thick plaits, while across each forehead was a band from which hung many silver coins, and in the hair fastened at intervals a blue stone, the customary charm against the evil eye. They departed, giving me to understand that they would come and fetch me to take part in the wedding festivities that same evening.

We were still talking over our coffee after dinner when word was brought in to me that the women were waiting. To my surprise, as I got up hurriedly to fetch a wrap, they came forward into the lewan, and threw back their veils.

"You don't know us yet?" said a voice in plain English. "You never found us out," and from the two Druse women rang out peals of merry laughter.

I was staggered at this unexpected dénouement, but so good was the disguise, so excellent the make-up, that positively they had to tell me their names, though I knew them in their own character very well. They were two English girls staying in the neighbourhood who had lived so many years in Syria that their Arabic deceived even the ladies who had acted as interpreters in the afternoon.

"Is the wedding feast a myth too?" I hastily inquired with some chagrin of mien.

"No; that is a reality," they said, "and you must come with us now. We are going there just as we are."

Across the terrace a real Druse woman was waiting, attended by a small native lad acting as link-boy, with lantern alight, to escort us to the house of the Druse wedding. The English girls were to be introduced as Druse visitors from a distance; not a syllable of their identity was to be whispered, in case the disguise should be regarded as an unfavourable omen on such an occasion.

The night was of Cimmerian darkness. We held on to one another, and stumbled as best we could down the stony path, winding in and between the low houses, falling now against one wall, then the other, the tiny taper of the lantern serving but to make the blackness visible. Mysterious figures rubbed against

us as they passed; anxiously the aged native woman entreated the girls to bear in mind the absolute and imperative need of keeping their faces veiled all the time, more especially when light from an interior illuminated our figures in passing.

Now the pebbled track seemed to become a mere gutter, with water running between the stones. A slight pause as we turned abruptly to the left beneath the deep shadow of a high wall, when the path widened again into an open space, dark with short mulberry-trees, through which the low-built cottages frowned darkly in the fitful glimmer of the tiny hand-lamp borne by the small cobold of a boy. It seemed just such a light as might have been carried by the ten virgins, the floating white veils of the three Druse costumes helping the illusion.

Again the two English girls were strictly warned not to let a single word of their own tongue escape their lips. On we went, feeling our way rather than seeing it. Again we were passed by gliding, mysterious figures. Again we appeared to pass through whole labyrinths of narrow, impenetrable lanes, in between irregularly built dwellings of the most primitive construction. Suddenly our guide turned aside, through an opening in the wall, and we found ourselves in a small enclosure, facing two humble domiciles, with a stone barrier dividing one entrance from the other.

Through the open door of the first low lintel we saw a thronged room of turbaned men chattering at the top of their voices, while seated on low stools

or squatting in groups on the floor. The bridegroom was sitting within, finely arrayed, dignified and solemn as became the occasion. From the other house, divided from the bridegroom's levée, poured forth such a babel of sound as one only hears in lands of the turban and veil. High-pitched and vibrant rang out the incessant trill of the festal notes of joy, varied by loud shrill cries of children, the screaming of young babies, the thrum of the tambour, the jingling of castanets.

Through the open entrance was seen a low, squalid interior; the roof supported by a few smoke-begrimed pillars, on these, and hanging also upon the walls around, were flickering oil lamps, which, with the yellow flame of a few candles held in various hands, constituted an illumination that threw the whole wild scene within into a weird effect of chiaroscuro. The place swarmed with women and children in every variety of costume of vivid and varied colouring. Down the step into the room we descended, and immediately came vociferous cries of welcome from eager, inquisitive, peering faces, accompanied by a pushing, and an energetic pulling through the densely crowded space.

Grimy hands laid hold of one; wrinkled faces, bronze-hued faces, dimpled cheeks, pressed closely round; blazing eyes, velvet eyes, curiously questioning eyes, stared upon the intruding yet welcome guests from every part of the room. Through a sudden opening in the crowd the remarkable centre of attraction, the one still spot that was the pivot of this raving, seething, company, struck one with unexpected shock.

Motionless as a statue stood the short, stout figure of a young woman, decked out like some ancient idol at the hour of sacrifice in a pagan sanctuary. The face was immobile as a mask, with tightly closed eyes, while the hair was parted in the centre and plastered sleekly on either side of the face. A high-peaked wreath of artificial flowers and foliage, brilliant pink and emerald, encircled her head. Behind her stood several women holding the bridal veil extended like a canopy, ready to envelop the bride instantly if taken by surprise, through the accidental entrance of one of the opposite sex. On either side stood two young Druse girls, each holding a candle with extended arm.

The visitors advanced to salute the bride with the expected kiss, murmuring congratulations and blessings during the ceremony of embrace. Every one was talking loudly at one and the same time, when not engaged in ululating the marriage joy-cries. A double row of women sitting on the floor lined the walls, while the centre of the room was an arena of struggling figures.

Close to the bride stood a tall Druse woman, her long veil thrown back from her face, her bearing erect and dignified. Just as I recognised her as one of the hostesses on the occasion of the visits of ceremony made in the village by the Consul's wife, the light of recognition also shone in her splendid dark eyes. She moved to meet me with a quick, graceful gesture, took me by the arm, produced a chair by some clever sleight of hand, put it in the place of honour by the bride's side, and gently urged me to be seated.

In this lower position the moving figures pressed round in suffocating proximity, children of every age crowded at my knees, touching me with their hot little fingers, manifesting no trace of shyness, only a burning curiosity to examine what to them was a new "zoological" wonder. The two mock Druse girls became recognised by all as the secret of their masquerade filtered through the assembly. Looks of amusement, admiration, mingled with covert resentment were cast upon them from every side. The elderly women, strictly conservative in the adherence to their time-honoured code of what was becoming in their sex, showed distinct disapproval both in mien and vehement whisper.

It was desired by one and the other that these two strange guests, like themselves yet not one of themselves, should make exhibition of their dancing powers in honour of the bride. On the other hand, the wedding party was in mourning, therefore at this particular marriage festival singing and dancing were not considered seemly. However, the major portion of the throng allowed curiosity to out-balance their notions of family decorum, and the pretty English girls in their handsome Druse garb gave a graceful performance of a native dance in the hastily cleared space before the bride, each dancing in turn while the other energetically rattled on the tambourine in the regulation rhythm of the swaying movements.

The novice was only apparent in the unguarded throwing of the handkerchief, made coquettish use of in the dance. The candles held on either side of the

bride were in peril of extinction more than once, a result that would have been regarded as a bad omen at the nuptial feast. The bride meanwhile had been allowed to sit down, open her eyes and watch the efforts made in her special honour. Her plump, good-tempered, but decidedly plain face relaxed into an expression of smiling observation, making her a pleasanter cynosure for the crowd of spectators than when masked in the inscrutable immobility of a wooden image.

" The effect of the moving figures, the lurid lights, the loud voices and cries became overwhelming. I grew faint for lack of air, overcome by the dense, foul atmosphere and the fumes of burning censers. Suddenly in the penumbra of the open doorway I saw, to my uttermost dismay, the familiar outline of a white fair-bearded face, which, peering into the room with undisguised show of interest, was cast into light by the nearest hanging lamp.

At once there was movement by the door, and feminine voices uprose in shrill, even clamorous, protest. A white-turbaned man developed from the blackness without and tapped the intruder on the shoulder like a gendarme on duty. To the other side stepped a red-capped youth and did likewise. All three figures withdrew in haste, blotted out like a vanishing lantern-slide.

Loud voices raised in angry expostulation and explanation became audible from without. The artist had committed the unpardonable sin of prying into the women's quarter, and was actively engaged in justifying

the terrible breach of etiquette by explaining that he sought his wife, that she was within the house, and he must see and speak to her on affairs of vital import. On the score of his being a mere ignorant foreigner, a married man, and an Englishman at that, the rash deed was condoned, but it was an experience that the artist, though ever daring to rashness in pursuit of the desired subjects for his brush, did not again repeat.

Soon afterwards a fierce-eyed Druse, evidently one of the men of the family, appeared at the door with perturbed, angry face. Two old women began to talk vehemently to him, declaiming with every appearance of portentous argument against the intrusion by foreigners upon their feasts. There seemed to be an unfriendly spirit awakening around us. The dance was over and we withdrew, making our salaams of farewell with due ceremony. The scowling Druse face still held watch at the door, and his tall figure gave scant passage to the departing guests. Boys tripped against us in the dark little forecourt as though hindering our progress of mischievous intent. From the neighbouring cottage, where the bridegroom was being fêted, men looked out blackly upon us as we passed.

Some days later came the turn of the Christians in the village to hold a festival of their own in which every one could share as spectator, for it was held on the roof-tops of their low houses. It was the Feast of the Cross, observed by the Maronites and the Orthodox Greek communities, but on different dates, the one twelve days after the other.

Little bonfires were ablaze on every flat roof, the dark figures moving around and tending them giving rather the appearance of some wild scene on the Brocken than the observance of a religious feast of the Church. In the courtyard before our locanda was kindled the biggest fire of all, the Greek servants of the household and the children of our hostess finding the same uncanny delight in skipping over the flames as the peasants of Western Europe on the eve of St. John.

The Maronites of the Lebanon, though not in this particular village, greatly excel in number the Druses, their hereditary foes in matters religious, political, and social; yet owing to the tacit understanding between the Moslems and Druses, when it comes to a matter of joining issue against the Christians, the Druse is an enemy to be reckoned with.

It has been surmised, though not proved, that the Maronites are the relics of the ancient Syrians, inhabitants of the Lebanon, and converted to orthodoxy by John of Maron, the alleged founder of the sect, in the sixth century. The solitude sought by those anchorites of old was found by John of Maron at the source of the Orontes, or El-Asi, north of the table-land of the Bekaa. About five hundred paces from the great spring of Ain Ezzarka, shaded by aged plane-trees, there rises a perpendicular cliff, nearly three hundred feet high, which commands the valley where the river rushes, as if in spate, over a bed of rocks.

Cut in the rock are cells which once served for a laura, or settlement of hermits, as the earliest monastic

institutions were named. Within this artificial cavern of three stories are altars, a staircase, and several dark, diminutive cells. From this retreat, called Dêr-Mar-Maron (monastery of St. Maron), the anchorite John converted the people of the Lebanon. The earliest references to the Maronites leave no doubt that they were monothelites, but in the twelfth century, probably owing to the influence of the Crusaders, whom they helped against the Saracens, they abjured their heresies, and with their patriarch and some bishops joined the Latin Church. It was not until four centuries later that their subjection to Rome was established, chiefly owing to the influence of Maronite clergy who had been trained in a special college founded in Rome by Gregory XIII., and thus brought directly under papal influence.

They reserve to this day certain privileges of ritual, and the lower priests of the community are allowed to marry. The services are conducted in Syriac, the scripture lessons in Arabic. In certain formulas, and one special litany, are interspersed a few sentences in Greek. Their intellect is undeveloped, for all the theological training they receive is based on books that have been the same for generations past, published by their own printing press and the Arabic press in Rome. They assume the teaching of these books to be true, and argue from many fallacies.

The monasteries possess a great portion of the best land, which the monks themselves cultivate diligently, and to great advantage, for it is entirely exempt from taxes. Rome has tried to keep the Maronites in close touch

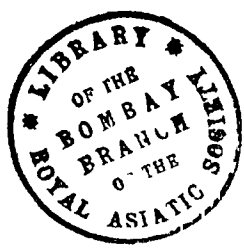
by means of missionary work, chiefly directed towards education, the surest method of instilling the influence of Rome into Syrian history of the future. The Maronite clergy, though outwardly applauding the Latins, are jealous, fearing that their own influence may consequently deteriorate. They still retain much of their native spirit of independence, which may eventually conduce to alienation from the papal sway.

Since the middle of the fifteenth century Kanobin has been the seat of the Maronite patriarchs. The monastery stands in the Kadisha valley, in the heart of the region of Bsherreh, above Tripoli; and near it, and everywhere in that district, are prosperous villages with white Maronite churches and other monasteries of note, which contain the printing presses for their liturgies and the works recently mentioned.

Like the Druses, the Maronites as a race are naturally bold and martial, still retaining much of the truculent spirit of their ancestors. Owing to the massacres in the Lebanon, following the fearful outbreak against the Christians in Damascus in 1860, when the inveterate hatred of the Druses spent itself in fury upon the Maronites, the feeling of distrust has created a spirit of antagonism and suspicion which is often peculiarly irritating to the Druse of to-day. More than once when we were in the Lebanon, the news spread up to the mountains of a sudden quarrel in the native quarters of Beyrout resulting in the murder of a Christian by a Druse. Immediately the whole district would be on the alert, for the aggressor would at once fly to the

hills, and Lebanon soldiers be sent out to trap him in every direction. Secret meetings of Druses and Maronites would be held in the dead of night, weapons brought surreptitiously into the villages, precautions and counter-precautions solemnly discussed by both communities alike, while the guilty man all the time would be sheltered first in one spot, then the other, by his own supporters, and though not hidden from his enemies, would remain unscathed for fear of a greater calamity befalling them all than the death, in a fierce possibly self-promoted quarrel, of the single Christian.

Hail the day when all of these hardy, independent mountaineers may live in security under their own vines in the midst of their mulberry and olive groves, bearing no malice one towards the other, both communities freed alike from the doubtful protection of a Turkish Government.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CHAPTER X

THE ÇEDARS OF AINZAHALTA AND THE PLAIN OF THE BEKAA

ON the eve of the day fixed upon for our journey to Baalbek the weather changed. Wind sprang up followed by rain and a terrific thunderstorm, which when spent over these heights of Lebanon renewed its force elsewhere, as was evident from the lightning flashes incessantly illuminating the mountain horizon-lines on every side. Unwilling to lose the time entirely, we made an excursion next day to the small cedar forest which could be seen near the hill-summit, high above Ainzahalta like a purple smudge. The wind was still high, but the sky promised fair, so in spite of warnings that a bear reported to be wandering in the vicinity of the cedars had not yet been tracked to its lair by the eager sportsmen, we set out on donkeys about nine o'clock.

The difficulty of these highland rides has been touched upon already, and this particular track seemed to excel them all in roughness, steepness, and rocky wildness. However, practice and also necessity quickly bring about a certain sympathy between that most agile and intelligent of beasts, the Syrian donkey, and

its rider—a sympathy that helps the one of them to trust to the other with a confidence that is both blind and humble. Have no fear of an unwary slip, give thought only to the orthodox attitude required respectively for ascent and descent of the hillside, give your beast absolutely his own way, and you will find yourself, whether climbing a track steep as a wall, or descending a hill precipitous as a cliff, imbued with one notion only : amazement and pride in your successful emulation of the fly on a window-pane. For as was mentioned before, the donkey or mule and his rider become one.

Straight up the rugged track we climbed, after quitting the ordinary road, direct to the ridge of the mountain, leaving the cedars somewhat to our left. Our object was to catch from this point the first glimpse of the plain of the Bekaa, upon which thought was strongly concentrated in advance.

Overpowering was the first impression received of the broad plain at our feet and the barrier of mountain-ridges on the opposite side.

> Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,
> With me from Lebanon :
> Look from the top of Amana,
> From the top of Senir and Hermon,
> From the lions' dens,
> From the mountains of the leopards.

It was the intervention of storm and its effects that had prepared this grandeur of prospect to be viewed *from* Lebanon *across to* Senir, and Hermon, and Amana.

Mount Hermon, which from this standing-point should have shown its three-peaked crown above the indigo ridges of Anti-Lebanon, was hidden in clouds. The "dew of Hermon" was falling thickly over the whole mountain, and upon the plain stretching below it, in a pearly sun-touched shower. A deep yet vivid purple hue rested over the wide placid valley like a veil, through which fertile patches of green and the wandering stream of the Litani showed darkly. The immediate vicinity of this ridge of the Jebel Barûk on which we stood was bathed in sunlight that touched to gold the brown, burnt soil, and to silver the scattered grey rocks.

To the left over the mountain-edge, drifting up from the valleys behind us, wafted the mist in a great vapoury cloud which dipped to the plain below. Swung across this luminous background from hill-top to valley was a brilliant rainbow—

> Glittering like crescents o'er a Turk's pavilion,
> And blending every colour into one.

Our muleteers took us back to the cedars by a short cut known to themselves alone, where there was no pretence of any track at all, only a wilderness of stones, crags, and precipitous slopes which tried to the utmost the dexterity of our beasts. The scattered forest we entered was similar in many respects to the one already visited on the heights above Baruk village. The ground between the trees was massed with rocks of a pure grey colour, and perforated all over like the honeycomb.

There were great boulders with small pinnacles on them, and rocks of all sizes and shapes clustering in heaps arranged, as if with method, in circles and other forms reminiscent of Stonehenge and Dartmoor. The soil in which they were embedded was red, and thickly strewn with cedar-needles.

Between the trees, which showed up dark green as the myrtle, rolled the fog, seeming to breathe as it expanded and contracted, alternately blown lightly into a texture of gossamer transparency, and opaque, yet always evanescent, mist. The branches spread out in the same familiar roof-like layers, upon which lay tiny baby cones the colour of madder tipped with orange.

The fog began to close in like rain or a thick Scotch mist, and from beyond the trees came the sound of thunder rolling from hill to hill. The mukari hastened to collect fuel for the inevitable fire, which they kindled in the first place with dry twigs and paper stored with forethought in the saddle-bags. The "tchai" again loomed cheerily to their imagination as the reward of their labours, together with the residue of the Inglizi provisions.

Between the rocks in a sheltered nook we spread the contents of the hamper, always made ready with generous hand for these expeditions by our hostess of the locanda Najoum. In the solitudes of these vestiges of the great cedar-forests that once clothed Lebanon as with a goodly garment we made a homely nook, though be it openly confessed there were moments when I glanced around with a feeling of apprehension lest a

vision of the suggested bear stalking as uninvited guest to the feast should loom bigly through the hedging mist.

At intervals the sky cleared right along the ridge. In one of these interludes I walked to the edge of the slope descending ruggedly from our feet, and suddenly, as I stood there looking west, the veil uplifted from the valley far beyond and below, with beautiful lights throwing up in radiant relief pine-forests on distant slopes, vineyards, dark-mouthed ravines, and the little village from which we had set out early in the morning, and beyond all a gleaming stretch of silver at what looked, from afar, the edge of the world: the Mediterranean sea. There was a delicious odour in the air. The soughing of the wide-spreading branches was to the ear like the sound of surge on the seashore. Through it all sounded up from that far-away upland valley the ringing of a bell, mellow and limpid in tone.

Then the mist cleared between the cedars and on the slope, which was stratified in slanting ridges. Underwood of live oak grew between the rocks; the greyish branches of small shrubs bearing red berries rambled over the stony soil. The yellow of the crocus made a strong note of colour against the pure grey of the rocky débris.

The descent from the forest was a difficult ride, the stones so irregular and large in the track—a mere torrent-bed—that riding downstairs would have been easy in comparison.

The next morning it was still misty and inclined to rain, but delay longer in setting out for Baalbek we

THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA FROM THE MOUNTAINS OF LEBANON.

would not. We had arranged to send heavy luggage by baggage-mules to Beyrout, and take with us to Baalbek only as much light luggage as an extra donkey could carry to the station of Ain Sofar. For we had decided to ride to the station by a track cutting over the hills, a route new to us, rather than return on the carriage road already familiar.

Before we reached the foot of the hill below Ainzahalta the mist crept up to meet us drawing clammy fingers over the whole landscape. Like a shroud it dropped over the bare peaks around, clinging to the ridges with shadowy persistency. As we crossed the bridge by the turbulent millstream down the narrow gorge to the left, the wind came sweeping with concentrated power. It caught the vapoury filaments in transit, and drew them round the glen like an invisible hand to form an opaque veil for the rocky slope. Our path then branched off from the high-road through a forest of young pines, climbing circuitously up the steep ascent, the brown-madder hue of the soil under the trees looking rich and warm.

The mules picked their way nimbly over stones and clods of earth, clipping the ground with secure footing. Steeper and wilder grew the upward track until the pines were out-distanced and a wilderness of rocks and chaotic débris of stone was entered upon. In and between the stones wound the track, down a pebble-strewn trough in the hillside, where the glisten of trickling water already indicated the birth of winter torrents.

Down came the rain in streams as we mounted a steep defile between towering boulders balanced high overhead in top-heavy confusion, while under-foot the big stones and rocks formed an irregular natural staircase up which the beasts clambered with painful, cautious step, head and ears indicating close attention to the difficult task. Finally we dismounted and took shelter beneath an overhanging rock until the rain subsided and only the mist remained.

The whole savagery of that muleteer track over hill and through glen to Ain Sofar is not easy to forget; such views of mountain gorges and distant mountain-summits with towering rocks, varied with glimpses of luxuriant vine and orchard-filled dales apparently miles below. And all the while one bore in mind the fact that these highlands of Lebanon were 4,000 feet above the level of the sea. In the most remote and wildest recess of the rocky passes through which we rode stood a Druse khalweh beneath a shelving cliff. It was a small square structure with a white-domed roof, and looked curiously like a mausoleum isolated for some solemn purpose to this spot of seclusion.

The whole ride occupied the space of three hours. The sun was shining when we gained the railroad and entered the train, but not before we had snatched a moment to obtain a thimbleful of scalding coffee to warm our chilled blood. Our fellow-travellers were two Syrians and an elderly sheikh, a green-turbaned descendant of the Prophet, who were also *en route* for Baalbek, having already journeyed all the way from Jerusalem.

Viewed from any point of the Lebanon range, the plain of the Bekaa, as I have already intimated, with Anti-Lebanon for its eastern boundary, comes before the spectator upon first sight as a revelation. The aspect of peace and world-remoteness is intensified by contrast with the distracting succession of mountain-passes, rugged heights seamed with ravines and precipitous torrent-beds, the sections of pine-clad slopes and peaks alternating with shaly eminences through which the traveller from the seaboard must pass before the view of the beautiful plain, spreading north and south with a space of ten miles between its mountain barriers, bursts unexpectedly upon the gaze like a material embodiment of the dream valley of Rasselas.

At El-Muallaka the first station at the foot of the Lebanon mountains we alighted, and took seats in one of the waiting diligences; this was an ordinary four-wheeled vehicle with seats for four people facing each other, a sun awning overhead. We proved to be the only passengers, so it served the purpose of a private carriage. The drive was lengthy, taking in all four hours and a half.

Zahleh, the most flourishing town of the district of Lebanon, is divided from El-Muallaka by a narrow lane only, though the latter village is in the vilayet of Syria. The road emerged from the town at the foot of the hill, in the midst of the luxuriant vegetation of its environs. Passing through vineyards where the thick arches of the trailing fruit-stems bend low under their luscious burden of purple grapes, and then emerging

on the open plain, that first impression of peace and repose is confirmed by the new sensation of full-breathed freedom, following upon the narrow passes, and insurmountable barriers of the mountain journey.

For miles ahead was seen the ashen face of the highway, running in gentle curves between the diminishing hill walls to the far horizon, where all seemed in conjunction with the sky-line to melt into infinity. East and west lay the hills in mellow atmospheric retreat, the wooded, undulating slopes of Lebanon and the arid stretches of Anti-Lebanon both merging alike after a gradual ascent from the plain into rock-seamed, lofty barriers against the deep blue of the sky. Flat-roofed villages, so remote on the even surface that they seemed to consist of toy houses, nested in wooded glens or stood out on small plateaux of the foot-hills. Other hamlets circled in isolated distinction at some distance from the road.

The warm tone of the soil against the pink and lavender hues of the hills, with the cerulean dome overhead, made the landscape full of charm and colour even under the autumnal condition of harvest-gleaned tracks of grass and corn and the scantiness of vegetation and flora, save where fruit-trees and poplars made oases of the villages, or parched thistle and herbage grew in detached clumps.

A waving line of low shrubs and dwarf willows meandered southward, indicating the wooded banks of the River Litani (more familiar to Western ears under its ancient name of Leontes), which we had viewed on the

previous day from the heights of Jebel Barûk. If attractive with a beauty unique to itself under these unfavourable conditions of season and drought, what must not the prospect have presented at that period of the world's history, when earth contained no more fertile spot than this table-land of the Bekaa, known to the ancients as Cæle-Syria (hollow Syria), though the name also included all the district south of Seleucia with the exception of Phœnicia.

Half-way to Baalbek we drew up by a wayside khan. It was a small, low building, fronted by a court or garden enclosed by a wooden fence, within which were a number of small tables and chairs. The Greek proprietor came out to greet us with effusion and urge us to partake of refreshment. Within the café we found a small supply of aërated waters, and native drinks, also a glass-doored cupboard disclosing to view biscuits, chocolate, and a variety of tinned and bottled comestibles. With biscuits and a liqueur-glass of arack taken as a precaution against cold after the stormy experience of the morning, we retired to a table in the open air. As we sat there an Arab rider passed on a beautiful grey thoroughbred.

Suddenly he turned up to the side of the fence, sprang from his horse, throwing the reins to a bystander, and walked into the garden. He was one of the native police who patrol the route and its vicinity between El-Muallaka and Baalbek. He wore a white keffiyeh, bound with the rope-like agal, a short fawn-coloured overcoat, coloured vest, and national full trousers. His gait and

movements were free and assured; he had the bearing, in a word, of a ruler, whether of a kingdom, a household, or only a *horse*. And this was quite in order, for does not even the proud owner of a Syrian donkey bestride his broad saddle of brightly striped hues with the lordly dignity of the monarch of a realm, or of an Alexander?

After a private conversation with the Greek proprietor he walked to and fro with swinging steps, scanning the passengers, of which others than ourselves had now arrived in a second well-filled diligence. Then he disappeared behind the carriages, dragging our driver away with an air of mystery.

"Faddal!" called this native driver, returning suddenly to his horses' heads, taking the nosebags away, and preparing to start. We were soon speeding along the dusty road, which a little distance farther on was in process of repair by scores of natives. A section of the highway looked as if a river in flood had swept along its course and washed it completely away. Later we ascertained that there had been a terrific storm a few days earlier—a storm which had brought flood, destroying many cattle, as well as the road, and drowning two men. But of recent tempest there was no evidence now in the sky; on the contrary, the nearer we approached to Baalbek the more superb the weather.

Along the route we passed many camels, Bedawin and Syrian travellers on foot, donkey or horseback. All at once a rider on a fleet light-coloured horse sped by like the wind. Who was the rider? Not he who had

alighted at the café, for the keffiyeh was bright in colour, though the horse was evidently the same. For the first time we observed that the original rider of the grey horse was on the box-seat of our carriage taking a turn at handling the reins of a team of three driven abreast. He seemed gay and highly delighted with his own achievement, especially after our discovery of the exchange of drivers. Not knowing at the time that the man was one of the mounted police, his appearance resembling that of an Arab sheikh, I asked myself if this was the prelude to a play not reckoned upon in our plans for this expedition.

The road still stretched like a broad undulating ribbon to the horizon. The little villages were so distant that our immediate surroundings seemed weirdly desolate and wild. But signs of life soon became visible. To the left wandering at random over the stubble were large troops of cattle. There were camels, mules, horses, and sheep, all roving at will in search of toothsome provender, though the barren surface, innocent of all growth but burnt-up thistles, promised but a sorry fare for their pains.

To whom did these straying beasts belong? A glance to the right of the highway showed heterogeneous clusters of small black structures so far out on the plain as to look from the road like large black ant-hills. There were hundreds of them spread in every direction, and doll-like figures moving among them and over the plain with a few straying donkeys and horses. Looming nearer to sight as we advanced, the ant-hills assumed shape and size; they were Bedawin tents in great

numbers ; the encampment, unusually large, belonged to a wealthy sheikh, head of an important tribe possessing many camels.

About half a mile from the road a dense crowd of people was massed in circular form. They were moving excitedly, shouting loudly and shrilly ; clangour of native music echoed across to the diligence. Our impromptu driver stopped the vehicle. There was a moment of suspense as he swung with a laugh from the box to the road. The real driver of the carriage jumped from the horse. Then the Syrian gendarme mounted with a display of much mannerism—as before a fitting audience of admiring foreigners—stared inquisitively into both carriages, and the next moment was careering at mad speed across the flat to the motley crowd before the Bedawin camp. He waved his arm with histrionic gesture of farewell as his horse plunged forward.

For a moment the carriage halted, the driver on his feet gazing with open-mouthed curiosity after his vanishing friend. Then we set out again on the never-ending road. A mile farther on again came the rapid clatter of hoofs behind us, and soon overtaking our steadily trotting team, the rider slackened pace on a line with the carriage and bent low with a smile of salutation. It was the same rider as before, the same grey horse. He talked in hurried tones to the driver, who soon turned round to us with a beaming face.

"It is a bride," he said in Arabic. "There is a wedding."

Both men regarded us with mien of smiling suspense

RELICS OF THE GREAT TEMPLE OF THE SUN.

as we looked back to the encampment, now far in the distance. "Franghi" backsheesh in return for a view of the Bedawin wedding hovered in their imagination. But we were too tired to return and take advantage of the invitation brought to us from the camp. The rider rode with us for a short distance, giving us frequent friendly smiles, his white keffiyeh floating gaily in the breeze, then he disappeared by magic. What became of him I know not, but he was nowhere visible when my eyes scanned the open plain a few minutes after he rode away.

A mile from our goal—the town of Baalbek—a small solitary edifice which had been visible from a long way off stood back from the road on a flat stretch of stubble-land. It was a modern weli built of ancient materials carried from the Acropolis. The shape was octagonal with eight beautiful pillars that had once supported a dome, now fallen in. A sarcophagus which had been placed erect between two of the columns as a prayer-niche was prone with the ground. The boundary of the old Roman ramparts of the town extended as nearly as possible to this point on the plain.

Though so near to the journey's end the solitude everywhere was marked. The only signs of life were the vanishing figure of a horseman speeding south and an occasional faint cry arising from the densely wooded environs which concealed all of the little town of Baalbek lying under the hill except the six columns of the Acropolis, which rear their queenly stature above the undulating forest of slender poplars and other trees.

We drew up at the Hotel Palmyra about six o'clock. The landlord, M. Pericli Mimikaki, was Greek, as betrayed by his name. The ruins of the temples of Baalbek were in the hands of the German Exploration Society, and the German architects sent by Government to conduct operations were for the moment the sole guests at the hotel besides ourselves. The hours I spent indoors were passed upstairs in the big lewan, which had a glass front and doors leading on to a balcony. Before the open door I often placed a small table for writing and sat facing the exquisite pillars of the Acropolis, which rose behind a foreground of tall poplars and brushwood. Beyond were the Lebanon hills as amethystine in colour as the mountains of Moab, as dimpled and wrinkled as the Sussex downs, or, to be more accurate, the hills of California.

Below the balcony was a small garden with high railings between ancient pillars which were found on the site of this hotel. The ancient edifice standing there was destroyed by flood, and from excavations made when building the hotel, and some inscriptions found, it is supposed that the house belonged to Zenedore, a tetrarch of Abylene. Other interesting relics discovered by M. Mimikaki have been sent to the museum at Constantinople.

CHAPTER XI

THE CITY OF THE SUN

FROM time unknown Baalbek, the most famous town of Cæle-Syria, situated under the brow of a low spur of Anti-Lebanon, has been named after the sun-god, to whose liberal favours of life-giving golden rays the inhabitants attributed the prosperity and fertility of their country. To the Romans it was Heliopolis, a name abandoned after the conquest of Syria by the Arabs, who again took up the ancient appellation of Baalbek.

In the myths of Phœnicia to Baalbek is accorded the position of the most important centre for the worship of Baal. This gave it an authoritative standing that was purely sacerdotal according to some traditions, to others one of active prosperity by reason of its advantageous site on the caravan route passing up the plain, through the entrance to Hamath, to Tripoli, Antioch, and other important cities. At any rate, though the magnificent ruins of the ancient temple, which render Baalbek to lovers of antique architecture the most interesting spot in Syria, are, according to the latest investigations, entirely of Græco-Roman origin, it is admitted that the edifices were undoubtedly erected on

a site that had previously been sacred to the worship of Baal, and from which the town derived its name in ancient days, far antedating the Roman occupation by Julius Cæsar, 47 B.C.

Quite at the beginning of the second century Baalbek ranked as the first city in Syria, a fact recorded by Ptolemy the geographer, who adds that it was here that Trajan Cæsar consulted the Oracle of the Sun with regard to an expedition against the Parthians. In view of this statement, and the later evidence of the two temples—the great Temple of the Sun and the smaller Temple of Jupiter—which placed the date of construction at the end of the second and beginning of the third centuries, it is certain that prior celebrity for being a site peculiarly sacred to the sun-god worship led to its selection for the erection of the famous buildings begun by the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (Caracalla), and finished and embellished by his successors.

Many interesting speculations are woven from tradition respecting the early origin of Baalbek. The whole plain abounds in legends that assert its occupation by Noah and his sons after the Flood. The tomb of Noah, of an enormous length—tradition makes all the mighty men of yore to be giants—is shown in an old mosque near Zahleh. Cain figures in these stories as a hero of distant antiquity, and is asserted to have built Baalbek as a fortress of protection after the pronouncement of the curse.

Nimrod was the next giant of tradition connected

with the building and prosperity of the town. The land of Shinar is declared to have been the plain of the Bekaa, and the ambitious leader of the builders of the Tower of Babel—so named in honour of the god Baal—Nimrod himself, King of Libanus. This story, by the way, contradicts the myth which connects his name with Babylon, with Abraham, and the Chaldæans, as related at length in the Koran.

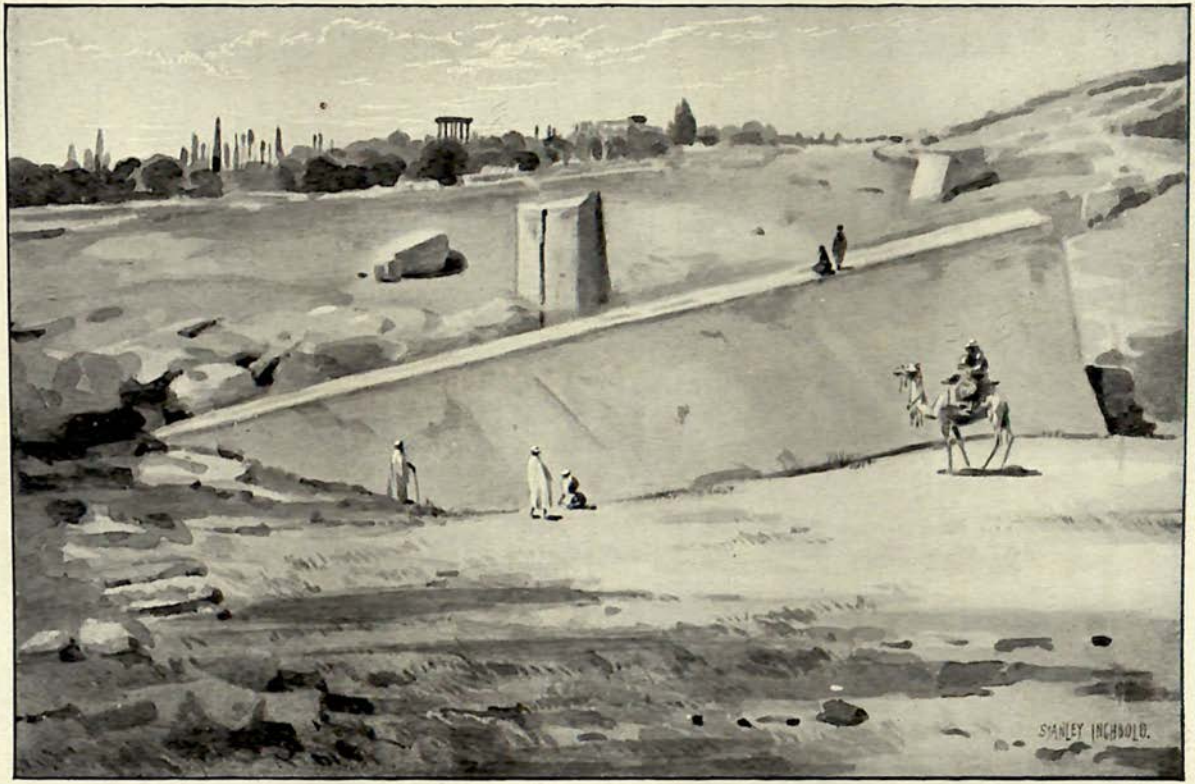
Following other traditional data, the name of Solomon is the next of importance. Suggestion makes Baalbek one of the store-cities he built in Hamath (2 Chron. viii. 4), a name which applied to the whole district, as well as the city of Hamath. For the edge of the Palmyrean desert, still believed by many to be identical with the wilderness of Tadmor, is only a day's walk from Baalbek. Solomon is also credited with the erection of a splendid temple to Baal, for the purpose of gratifying his wives' proclivities for strange gods. This story would accord with another tradition which relates that the wise king caused to be built at Baalbek a splendid palace for Balkis, Queen of Sheba. It was this Temple of Baal, we are told, that the Phœnicians in later years made the religious centre for feasts of renown, attracting innumerable worshippers at certain seasons of the year from all parts of the country, after the same fashion that the festival of the Greek Easter draws thousands of pilgrims to witness the perennial mock-miracle of the holy fire in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Through the splendours of the Phœnician era and

the dynasty of the Greek Seleucidæ, tradition preserved the reputation of a sacred town, while under the Roman domination the building of the great Temple of the Sun and Temple of Jupiter established a durable fame which the mere view of the majestic relics makes promptly appreciable.

Under Mohammedan rule the character of the town changed to one of industrial activity celebrated for certain local manufactures. The temples were converted into fortresses, the old Roman ramparts allowed to fall into decay, and their débris was used to build an Arab town-wall of considerably reduced area. Arabic historians of that period and other epochs unite in praise of the beauty and antiquity of Baalbek, and lay stress on the abundance of streams, fine gardens and trees in the environment; they make mention of mosques, other sacred buildings, of schools and markets.

Baalbek has been besieged, pillaged at least a dozen times, visited by one earthquake, in 1158, that overturned houses, destroyed ramparts, fortress, and a great part of the temples, by another in the fourteenth century, and a very destructive one again in 1750. Disastrous floods from time to time, especially one in 1318, have occasioned losses of life and property quite irreparable. The quarrels and petty warfare with neighbouring princes of the ruling Farfouche emirs, in addition to the impoverishing effect of so many successive wars and physical catastrophes, reduced Baalbek from its position of the most affluent town in Syria to the present obscure and modest status. It would long ago have ceased to be visited or known



THE COLOSSAL STONE IN THE ANCIENT QUARRY, BAALBEK.

to travellers from the West were it not for the fame of the gigantic fragments reminiscent and mutely eloquent of a splendid vanished past.

What of the Baalbek of to-day? Follow the road leading towards the town until it passes between the trees with a wall on the left, and a copse of nut-trees and olives filling a lengthy hollow below the level of the highway. Beyond this wood a pathway turns abruptly off the road to the right, and curving backward as it ascends the slope of the hill leads to a disused quarry which shows traces of tremendous labour wrought in its massive sides during ages of long ago.

It is the ancient quarry from which the Cyclopean blocks used in building the temples were hewn. To this day there lies a colossal specimen of the stones, named Hajar-el-nubla from a legend related by the natives. It is perfectly shaped but not separated from the rock; it is seventy-one feet in length, fourteen feet high, thirteen feet wide, and in weight about twelve hundred tons. These prodigious dimensions are not appreciable from afar, but approach and stand beside it, feeling yourself in comparison a veritable midget, and then only wonder and awe are aroused in the mind as to the means by which its fellows have been transported to the enclosure wall of the Great Temple, where they still stand as firmly set as at the period of construction. The whole matter is one over which countless speculations have been formulated, but it remains a mystery to this hour.

The whole quarried excavation is strewn with half-

shaped blocks in process for building purposes, and left untouched since the days when the whole area resounded with the blows struck upon the rock by the myriads of slaves experiencing as severe a bondage as the Israelites did in Egypt, in order to raise to their conquerors' gods a temple considered through all the ages as one of the marvels of the world. Here and there among the littered débris are oblong troughs cut in the bed-rock. These are ancient tombs which may once have held the bodies of persecuted Christian slaves and other toilers, when they succumbed to the herculean tasks imposed upon them.

Viewed from the pathway which runs round the side of the cliff over against the giant stone, there are still indications of massive battlements on the rock escarpment showing that the Roman rampart skirted these ancient quarries, and passed along the ridge of the hill behind the town. As one mounts the winding path there can be seen to the right a white-domed weli of modern erection standing on a levelled terrace of rock in quiet retreat. Close by it, built into the rocky sides of the hill, are a few native dwellings only distinguishable in hue from their stony background upon near approach.

Still the hill ascended as I walked along the ridge until near the summit of what is known as the knoll of Sheikh Abdallah, a small ruined building near a lonely tree, called for attention. The platform on which it had been erected was one fashioned in crescent shape out of the hillside, the rocks standing out on both sides of the plain square façade. A small flight of steps

led into the interior. Above the portal was an Arab inscription which showed that this was the Hubbet-el-Amjad, or cupola of Amjad, the king who caused the building to be erected. Higher still there were arched openings in the wall. Fluted pilasters built into the walls showed that the little mosque had been put together from ancient materials used in an earlier edifice. The floor of the interior was strewn and heaped with blocks and stones that had fallen from the ruined cupola and ornamental headstones.

Seated upon one of the massive blocks of rocks scattered in front of the Hubbet-el-Amjad, I looked down upon the town of Baalbek and received impression of its general aspect in the present day. It was a view that after a short period of time would never be quite the same again, for the railway was swiftly approaching. The director of the constructive and engineering operations had fixed upon a site for the Baalbek station about half a mile away from the town. With right sentiment of reverence for the noble ruins of the Acropolis, he planned that the railway line should pass behind the forest of green trees out on the plain. So blind were the inhabitants to what constitutes the great charm of their old world-renowned town that no sooner did they hear of this arrangement than they drew up a petition and sent it to the Governor-General of the vilayet begging with great urgency that the railway station should be constructed right in their very centre.

And they won their desire, as far as the requisite concession was concerned.

Embedded in the hill-slope stretching from my feet, as if overtaken in the rushing débris of a big landslip, were great rocks, sprinkled with velvety lichen of deep sienna and purple shades. Below these was a bare grey descent extending down to the Syrian-built cottages and houses uniform in colour with the dusty soil, which the winds from the east had whirled in powdery showers over the level roof and low walls. In somewhat jarring contrast to the native dwellings, which are in harmony of tone and structure with the old-world impression of environment, stand out with violent effect the new, glaring walls and red-tiled roofs of the various missions and hotels built after European methods. At the foot of the slope the high-road glittering in the brilliant sunlight like a pale broad ribbon ran into the town, disappearing between the houses.

Beyond these on the flat was the verdant belt of gardens and orchards filled with fruit-trees and high, silvery poplars. Between these was an open space that looked like the dried bed of a pool overspread with heaped patches of vivid orange in conspicuous relief against the greenery and grey soil. It was a store of maize drying in the sun for winter use. Here and there between the thick foliage spread the pale flat roof of a house. There were walled spaces suggesting special ownership of the divided enclosures. In one of the gardens, set out in conventional stiffness of arrangement with cypress, myrtle, and other shrubs, glittered the white dome of a small cupola. This covers the tomb of Kholat, a granddaughter of Ali, the prophet of the

BAALBEK FROM ANTI-LEBANON.

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Metawilehs, to which religious sect more than half the inhabitants of Baalbek now belong.

To the right of this forest of green—which also extended as a girdle beyond and around—rose the ruins of the ancient temples with a beauty of form, a grandeur of dignified stature indescribable. Bathed in the full light of the sun, the god to whose glory they were dedicated, gleaming the colour of gold shot with bronze, so perfect in their magnificent proportions as to appear the embodiment of symmetry and delicacy, it was the exquisite columns of the Acropolis displayed in their full height on the imposing mural basement that fixed first direct attention.

Nearer to the eye but parallel with these stately pillars extended the massive south of the temple dedicated to Jupiter; the ruddy yellowish blocks of the masonry were many tones deeper in colouring than the sun-shot Acropolis. One huge column of the peristyle seen leaning against the cella was shaken into this precarious position by the last great earthquake, and so strong is the ancient workmanship which fixed the iron clamps holding it together that the fall broke several stones of the wall without the column itself coming to pieces.

The remainder of the columns which once filled that empty space of the platform, to be seen in perspective between the three pillars facing the west wall and the four supporting an Arab tower at the south-eastern angle, are concealed from view. For like dethroned monarchs they lie in pell-mell confusion among the trees in the gardens below, where they were hurled headlong

by the cataclysm which shook the ruined temples into their present condition.

There are other irregular outlines of walls and buildings in the Acropolis area which show in their decay remains of an inferior, less refined architecture that is even in some respects ungainly and elementary. These are the ruins of the Arab fortifications built at various intervals under Moslem rule when sieges, long sustained and terrible, compelled the garrison to defend the town under shelter of the strong Roman-built enclosure of the temples.

The whole combined in colouring and situation to form a picture of unique beauty set in a frame of living, glinting green. The wood stretched to the north, making of the ruins an island. Beyond this northern end of the boscage the town itself spread out and crept close to the hill, the Oriental roofs mounting like terraces far up the rocky slope, the shimmering grey and white walls, the vari-coloured shutters and lattice windows, the pillared and arched entrances, the hanging terraces and galleries, the foliage of acacia, fig, and nut trees, glimpses of figures in Eastern garb moving on the house-tops, all massed together in harmonious contrast with that unforgettable picture set in green.

Lift the gaze and look beyond the town, beyond the silver waves of poplar foliage to the plain, as it sweeps across to the Lebanon hills in broad ripples of reddish brown melting into a golden-brown, alternately with streaks of pale sulphur-yellow and vivid green, where the tender grass had sprung since the recent rainstorm

at the summons of the sun's warm beams. The knobby hillocks, looking like great tumuli and casting great purple shadows, rising behind the boscage of the town indicated another ancient quarry, interesting with rock tombs and other sepulchral vestiges dating to the Roman period.

The sun was striking with marvellous atmospheric effect full on the slopes of Libanus. The dark markings on the delicately purple slopes caused by indentations of surface and scattered timber stretches were like arteries beating through the quivering haze of the sun-bathed distance. Across the foot-hills was flung a long pale shadow, an effect produced by the sparse wooding of trees which revealed the surface of the ground between. The plain vanished north and south between the diminishing mountain-walls of its boundaries.

A long pause while the eye drew in full satisfaction of the beautiful landscape, and then the walk was continued through an old Moslem cemetery which covered the summit of the hill. The central tomb crowning the highest point was of a noted Sheikh Abdallah. It was surrounded by a thickly set picket of thin posts. Evidently it was a weli held in high veneration, because countless multi-coloured rags were tied to the wooden railings, dumb witnesses to the vows and visitations of faithful Moslem pilgrims.

Now that the real summit of the hill is attained, the view from the other side discloses a small valley below with the bare slopes of Anti-Lebanon rising beyond it. We pass a large rock excavation on the brow of the hill, which shows that its rocky hollows and recesses have

been recently used as receptacles for the conversion of grapes from the surrounding vine-plants into the sweet syrup called "dibs." Then the verge of the hill-spur comes abruptly, and the ground is littered with fragments of columns and large blocks. Remains of massive masonry at the brink of the perpendicular cliff, where we can look down upon the roofs of the Metawileh quarter of the town, indicate another boundary of the ancient Roman wall.

"Now we descended a steep zigzag path. It was rugged and stony, and clung to the side of a precipitous cliff, which had underwood and trees of fantastic growth, with gnarled branches growing from every crevice and ledge where the roots found soil in which to thrive and live.

High above the path-rock tombs perforated the whole face of the cliff, their dumb mouths seeming to hold concealed in mysterious retreat the whole undiscoverable buried history of old Baalbek, of which it is well-nigh impossible to find authentic trace. Every turn of the zigzag descent revealed fresh points of view over the town to our left; peeps into the hidden courts made attractive with flowering shrubs and creepers, the sight of gaily garbed women and children, busying themselves on the roof-tops with great patches of corn spread out on coloured mats to dry in the sun.

At the foot of the cliff the path, after skirting a garden-wall, emerged unexpectedly in a pleasant avenue lined with tall willows, which interlaced their leafy branches overhead, forming an effectual screen from the

fervent sun-rays. We had descended to a fertile dale watered with streams that have their source in a noted spring called Ras-el-Ain, which gives its name to the whole of that happy valley.

The streams flow in the direction of the town, dividing near the spring on either side of a verdant meadow bordered with willow-trees. The purling water passes with turbulent rush and sparkle through the tunnelled archway of a low native mill. In the dim interior of the grey dwarfed building men and women were squatting in picturesque attitudes busily employed in sifting corn. Outside on the banks of the little river engaged in washing clothes small lithe-limbed women in blue Bedawin robes were chattering shrilly. Their dark, keen-eyed faces with the tattooed chin and mouth retired into quick concealment behind a hastily drawn veil as the strangers crossed their vision.

Still following the road conducting to the Ras-el-Ain an old mosque came to view, a few cottages of ordinary build, cube-shaped and grey, also a pretty country house with a pleasant garden belonging to the German Consul of Damascus. We stood on tiptoe and peered through a broken archway in the outer wall of the mosque and saw that a Bedawin camp couched in the centre of the enclosure. The usual débris of a ruined building was strewn over the turf; a few camels and horses were browsing at pleasure; children played in and between the tents, while a number of men were smoking on the ground.

The road skirted the mosque, but instead of following

it we took a short cut over a stone causeway bridging the brook, and crossed to the opposite side of the greensward. The dale was once enclosed within the Roman walls, and just as it is now the favourite spot for celebrating wedding festivals, fantasia of horsemanship and other holiday fêtes, so fancy pictures it, in those golden prosperous days of the early Christian era, as a beautiful pleasure-garden resorted to by the people of Baalbek in search of recreation and refreshing shady walks.

Here, where on Sundays the whole greensward is dotted with townsfolk, the banks of the stream spread with light-hearted groups clad in raiment resembling gaily decked flower-beds, and the air ringing with the strains of the pipes and humming to the thrum of the tambour, one can truly realise the tragical melancholy of the Song of Exile: "by the waters of Babylon there we sat, we wept."

> The song they demanded in vain—it lay still
> In our souls as the wind that hath died on the hill—
> They called for the harp—but our blood they shall spill
> Ere our right hands shall teach them one tone of their skill.

On the banks of a stream the Syrian spends ever the happiest hours of his life gazing at the rippling waters, playing his pipes or sometimes kanun, and singing until the dipping of the sun in the west is the signal for him to seek his home. For him to weep and not to rejoice, to hang up his instrument in the willows overhead instead of singing from sheer gaiety of heart like the birds in the leafy branches above, is to suggest

a passivity that signifies the very acme of melancholy, to strike the lowest diapason of tragedy and despair.

The sun had set, but before the short twilight had become darkness, the moon rose to throw its glamour over the walk back to the town on the opposite side of the stream. We lingered no longer, for that night we had planned, through the courtesy of the German architects, our fellow-guests, to visit the temple area by moonlight.

The glamour of poetry shed by the moonbeams upon many famed ruins of this earth's transitory glory has been perpetuated in unforgettable verse. Would that a poet, with the true seer's eye and a gift of expression adequate to fitting interpretation of the vision, might wander into the ruins of Baalbek when the moon is high in the deep azure of night and give to the world his undying impressions! For a mere bald writer of prose the task is impossible, though the ramble we had that night over the whole area of the Acropolis is one of the pictures of our Eastern travels retained by memory least likely to be ever forgotten.

In daylight the subterranean passage, through which every visitor had to pass before emerging into the heart of the ruins, struck chilly, but not menacing, impression. At night the massive masonry of the fortress wall guarding the entrance frowned dread of the unknown straightway into our hearts. The vaulted way seemed interminable, but fixing the eye on the blue shimmering aperture at the further end we stumbled over the rocky path without waiting for the delayed

lantern. When the cool night air actually played on the cheek, relief was almost intense, and then the eye uplifted, but only for an instant.

So overpowering was the first impression of loneliness and awe created by the sudden sight of the giant pillars towering in the mystic blue light, that instinct bade one creep behind the nearest great stone and hide—hide from the guardians, the genii, who seemed to be lurking in the black depths between the fallen pillars, to be immovable as sentinels in the penumbra of the vast colonnade.

But there description fails. The wonder of that whole magic area through which we wandered as under a spell outstrips expression. The veil of the supernatural lay lightly alike on the untouched surfaces as on the lately buried relics, now laid bare by the persistent burrowing of the searchers after truth. Ghosts of the Long Ago hovered near. In the light which transfigures all things earthly with an atmosphere that is supramundane, they whispered strange tales of a phantom world, which at the moment seemed vivid and real but in the brightness of the morrow vanished as a dream, which memory yearns in vain to retain.

After this it seems heresy to hark back to a momentary panic which seized upon me when we came back to the great portal from the "Tower of the Wind," where we had climbed to view the moonswept plains and hills of what appeared under the new conditions to be an unknown world encircling this transfigured enclosure.

GREAT PORTAL OF THE TEMPLE OF JUPITER.

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Among the débris below, in a dim angle at the foot of the Arabic citadel, strange fires were sprouting into flames. Black figures, grotesque and impish in the double illumination of moon and firelight, seemed as actively employed as are the witches of the weird scene which introduces *Macbeth*. Were they earth-gnomes, weaving some horrid incantation to keep us for ever in the domain of their masters the genii? Worse still, were they marauding Bedawin or robbers caught in the act and deed of trespass upon forbidden ground, who would pounce upon us as spies and incarcerate us in one of the countless vaults concealed in these cumbered grounds?

Alarm was stilled with the first word of explanation. Fire had been kindled in a secluded corner, that its yellow flare might not intrude upon the moon's serenity. Fire had been tended industriously by the zealous attendants of the present lords of the Acropolis, the German effendis, in order that the song of the kettle might be heard. For the nights were cool in those high altitudes, and kindly forethought had provided an unexpected antidote against chill.

Thus it happened that though in danger of losing one's equilibrium in the mazes of an enchanted land, we were handed back to the firm ground of prose in the shadow of the great portal itself. We sat down among the mighty fallen over against the moon-bathed façade of the Temple of Jupiter and yielded to the spell of tea, while giving ear to the plaintive strains of the saddest of German *Volkslieder*.

CHAPTER XII

BAALBEK

A SEAT in front of the open window before the hotel balcony afforded entertainment as varied and animated as the shifting scenes of a kaleidoscope.

Across the road were houses built at a slanting angle with the street. They looked like an irregular heap of square, white boxes with earthen sun-baked lids, the roofs of some constituting a promenade and drying area for others built on a higher level. The backs of another clump of cottages formed a barrier to the street, and the flat roof extending across the whole appeared but an upper stratum of the white road beneath. It was covered with large mats on which golden grain had been spread out carefully to dry in the sun. Occasionally a woman or two mounted a rude ladder and turned over the grain. A man sat cross-legged at the edge of the roof watching the people who passed by.

A rider in gorgeous apparel consisting of a bright blue kumbaz, an abbai of brown and black, and a pink and gold keffiyeh bound with massive agal, drew up beneath the roof and harangued the man above. They were joined by a second rider, who galloped full pelt into sight and then reined in his horse with an abruptness

that made the animal slide forward stiffly like a wooden figure. The newcomer was a wild-looking Bedawi with small pointed beard and black moustache, his dark face showing of a tropical bronze in contrast with a keffiyeh of brilliant orange.

Slowly and cautiously a camel came padding down the street, balancing from either side two huge jars which seemed as though they must be a survival of the jars of *The Forty Thieves*. The inevitable donkey was its companion, and leading both were two tawny, hawk-eyed men garbed above the Eastern pantaloons in capacious jackets of crimson, decorated with a deep gold border, and embroidery extending up the back. Their heads were covered with black keffiyehs and agals.

Now a woman crossed the road from the house at the side of the hotel. She was dressed in a bright blue flowing dress with hanging sleeves, a cream-hued veil covering her hair and hanging down her back to the knees. After her toddled a small child in a pale yellow frock girdled beneath the arms and extending to his toes. He was carrying a pewter basin high above his head as he tripped across the road, but suddenly he stopped with gaping mouth to view a new figure approaching the scene. This was a lad of sixteen who was blowing his shepherd's pipes as he strode down the street with free, swinging step. His pink and yellow coat was flapping in the breeze and bulging out with the package which he had placed within to leave his fingers free for the pipes. He wore a white keffiyeh and voluminous white pantaloons.

The next actor crossing the stage was an ancient man carrying canvas bags slung over his back, and wearing the black robe and tall brimless hat of a Greek priest. So aggressive and snarling was the grizzled physiognomy, so tall and upright his figure in spite of advanced years, that in any other garb he might have been a veritable brigand. He was so evidently the mendicant demanding, not pleading for, alms as he looked up at the balcony with defiant stare, and he lingered long outside the gateway of the hotel before proceeding on his way.

Nowhere in Syria did we see so many horses of race and beauty as at Baalbek and its vicinity. As again two riders passed down the street on two fine thoroughbreds, and I gave eye not only to the proud, self-conscious pace, but to the native saddles, crimson cloths and trappings of brown woven with scarlet and gold, a carriage drew up before the hotel.

There alighted three travellers who had driven over the plain from the station at El-Muallaka. One seemed to be an old sheikh in snowy turban and a fine silk robe; another was middle-aged and dark, in European dress and tarboosh. The third man appeared to be their dragoman or personal attendant. In a few moments they had ascended the staircase and walked into the lewan.

The unexpected appearance of a Franghi lady sitting in solitary possession of the long room roused their instant curiosity. The old sheikh advanced and stood near me in silence for some moments, alternately looking at me and my work-case, which lay open on the table

beside me. Suddenly he made an expressive gesture signifying the action of sewing, and then pointed his finger at the work-case.

The tall Turk, who had seated himself Oriental fashion on the opposite divan, explained in French that his companion was making request for a needle and cotton.

"With pleasure, monsieur," I replied, and after threading one into the other I handed them to the old man.

He shook his head, caught hold of the collar of his silk kumbaz, and showed me that it lacked a button. From his pantomimic action I gathered that he wished me to sew the button on for him. He bent his head low as I signified no disapproval of his demand. With every stitch that secured the button in its place I meditated that these two Orientals, who would have done things unutterable to their own wives for performing a similar service for a strange man, were in all probability reflecting in their turn on the curious passivity of Western men that allows to their women the mischievous liberty which from the Oriental point of view provokes such a situation

No thanks were rendered, by the way, for my piece of work. The old sheikh's demeanour as he gravely posed himself on the divan by his fellow-traveller, seemed to imply his opinion that the deed had been sufficient reward of itself, blended with a secret congratulation that he had been the instrument of destiny forcing one of those hare-brained, forward women of Western races to do something that was essentially feminine and useful.

Then were opened upon me the floodgates of a persistent and minute interrogation by the man in the fez, who was now smoking a cigarette. He was bearded, and had a somewhat troubled expression as if brooding over and inwardly debating problems of difficulty. His eyes were dark and somewhat prominent with a slight cast. When speaking, inquiry was as visible in his face as in his speech, his eyes fixed upon the person accosted with an expectancy that demanded a speedy and satisfactory reply.

"Where are you going?" he asked, in French.

"I am going nowhere at present. I am staying in Baalbek," I replied.

"Do you live in Baalbek?"

"No."

"Where did you live before you came to Baalbek?"

I explained that I was travelling not in the ordinary way, but staying for a lengthened period in various parts of Syria. This remark seemed to excite great interest, for he turned to the old sheikh and spoke animatedly in Turkish, making no concealment that he was discussing my latest statement.

"Are you married?" he asked with sudden renewed inquisitiveness.

"Yes."

"Where is your husband?"

"He is in Baalbek."

"What is he doing here?"

"He is painting pictures."

"Have you any children?" "How many years have you been married?" "During those years have you had any children at any time?" These and other questions were shot at me in turn, receiving more or less direct replies, according to their nature. It was part of my method of gaining insight into Oriental character and ways not to curtail or check any experience that came into my way.

A calm face was that of the old man's, unlined with care, though the serenity was such as might have come with the wisdom of years and the rigid self-control of a long life. He was silent except when prompting a question or giving ear to the interpreting words of the dark-visaged Turk.

The head-waiter now appeared with coffee for the newcomers, who made sign that the tray should also be handed to me. They drank their beverage without ceasing the fire of inquisitive query, and replaced the cups on the tray just as fresh visitors were ushered into the lewan.

These consisted of a number of white-turbaned personages whose appearance in spotless rich array pointed them out as people of distinction in the town. Advancing ahead of the rest was a full-bearded man with strong, pronounced features, lustrous in colouring, vivid lips, and fine black eyes. As they came slowly up the room making dignified salaams, I surmised correctly that theirs was a visit of ceremonious salutation to the first arrivals, doubtless personages of some importance. I retired to my room, from whence I soon

heard loud talking carried on in the lewan, vehement and emphatic in tone.

My husband returned and we both went out for a walk. Downstairs in the hall we were told upon inquiry that the chief visitor who had cross-examined me closely was no less a personage than a well-known pasha from Constantinople, brother of a favourite courtier of the Sultan. The old sheikh was a "parent."

The ladies of his harem arrived in another carriage. Two of them were closely veiled, and wore the black satin "tschar-schaf," or domino mantle concealing the figure. The third lady's face was uncovered, showing a pale complexion, and large almond-shaped eyes with dark eyebrows; over a wealth of golden-red hair she wore a mantilla of black lace, a favourite headgear with those Christian ladies of the Near East who have not entirely adopted European fashions. A little girl was of the party, dressed simply but not becomingly in a plaid frock, her hair uncovered and drawn back in a tightly plaited pigtail. The party was escorted to another wing of the hotel, where they remained in strict seclusion during the whole visit except on the one occasion they all went out for a drive.

Later on, when we had returned to the hotel and had prepared for dinner, we went again into the lewan, where only the pasha, sheikh, and one visitor were now present. The visitor remaining was the dark, full-bearded head of the local dignitaries. The pasha came away from his divan near the window and removed to

one behind the table under the big lamp where my husband and I were reading.

"Bonsoir, madame!" he said pleasantly. I replied at once, and seeing that his attention was fixed upon my husband made the desired introduction. Just as he seemed ready to launch out into the familiar flood of amiable inquiries his dragoman appeared on the scene through a door at the end of the lewan. In his arms he bore a small rolled carpet which he brought forward and stretched open on the floor half-way down the room in front of the pasha's bedroom.

Immediately the old sheikh rose to his feet with folded hands. A few words spoken in hurried tones passed between him and the pasha. The visitor made an emphatic gesture with his hand in response to a remark from the pasha, then turned his back and closely studied a letter in his hand. The pasha looked hesitatingly at us, moved with wavering gait across the room as if undecided upon his line of conduct, finally he turned with hurried movement to the sheikh, who was standing on the carpet by the bedroom door.

Then side by side they knelt in evening prayer to Allah, going through every one of the customary genuflexions, prostrations, and muttered formulæ. The worship ended, each returned to his seat, the attendant rolled up the carpet, and again withdrew to the distant room.

The dinner-bell sounded. The pasha, his "parent," and visitor were seated opposite us. No sooner had all taken their places than he pointed to the visitor beside him.

"This is the judge of Baalbek," he said by way of introduction, "the cadi, the procureur of the district, and representative of the Governor, who is at present absent from the town."

The Governor's representative was very deaf, and when addressed by his host in loud tones replied in a whisper, and plainly signified in more ways than one that rèticence on certain subjects was not only expedient but essential. They whispered vehemently into each other's ears for a few moments, then became silent for the remainder of dinner.

About half-past nine the distinguished guests made further orisons on their prayer-carpet in the lewan, then withdrew for the night. Next morning the pasha held a regular levée for several hours. Visitors of all castes, religions, and nationalities poured in continuous stream to pay him the homage of a ceremonial visit. At noon he went out holding a big white umbrella over his head; he walked with a slight droop of the shoulder, quietly, with unostentatious mien that lacked all pretentious ceremony. Under the shade of a black sun-umbrella his relative the old sheikh walked solemnly beside him. With marked attention of manner both were followed at a respectful distance by the worthy host of Hôtel Palmyra, the dragoman, and a belated visitor at the reception. Thus the cortège sallied forth, but only one member of it returned,—for the pasha remained for the rest of his visit in Baalbek with the friend he had gone out to call upon. The hotel saw him no more.

RUINS OF THE ACROPOLIS, BAALBEK.

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Religious feeling runs very high at intervals in Baalbek. The rival sects are not Druses and Maronites as in the Lebanon, but chiefly Greek Christians and Metawilehs, who are a martial race, proud of their religion, adhering strictly to its ceremonial observance. They regard Christians as the Jews do swine, having a perfect horror of defilement from infidels. They make an exception with regard to Moslems, but only because they dread their power. Their secret sympathies are all centred in Persia, which they consider the stronghold of their religion and its Shiite doctrines. For it was the Persians who first raised Ali and his sons, son-in-law and grandsons of Mahomet, to a rank superior to the founder of El-Islam, making of Ali a supernatural being, the incarnation of Allah. The Metawilehs to this day preserve the Shiite doctrines in their purest original form.

They possess several villages in the north of Palestine, and also in the Lebanon as far as Homs. In Bsherreh reside Metawilehs who are believed to be the real descendants of El-Hassein and El-Hossein, sons of Ali: they wear green turbans as a sign of their honourable descent, and make display of an extreme unction of manner. They are addressed in letters even by beys of high distinction as "My liege, lord master, and hope after Allah."

They have a number of curious and absurd superstitions, the majority of them hanging upon their hatred to Christians and other infidels. The cup of water willingly bestowed by others upon a thirsty stranger,

is refused, or given with extreme reluctance, by a Metawileh, because it is his bounden duty to destroy a vessel that has been polluted by the lips of an unbeliever. To decide a question or duty upon which they are in doubt, they will take their string of beads —seldom out of an Oriental's hands—and, in the name of Allah, taking a portion of the rosary into their fingers, begin to count the beads two and two until the centre of the string is reached. Should three of the beads remain, the option of choice is left to himself; if only two or none remain, the business must be abandoned—it is against the will of Allah.

The lower classes of this sect are often addicted to petty theft, and they are splendid liars; but as these qualities are chiefly exercised in contact with those of another religion they are not regarded as criminal.

It is small wonder, therefore, that in a town where out of five thousand inhabitants, chiefly Metawileh, only one thousand are Christians, the tension between the rival factions becomes quickly strained under conditions of strife or disagreement. But though the Christians are in the minority, their head family is an influential one, rich, and under the lofty protection of his Imperial Majesty the Sultan.

Rivalry and rancour flowed to a dangerous extreme for at least two weeks of our stay in Baalbek. The exciting cause was a mere quarrel which took place at a Greek Christian wedding. While the nuptial ceremony was in progress, some mischievous Metawileh youths entered the church uninvited, and created a disturbance

by attempting to take their seats in the place reserved only for women. The chief men of the church came to remove the disturbers, who resisted, but were finally evicted with force.

After the church service was over, the procession took its way to the house of the bride, and while on the route the same Metawileh youths, who had evidently been watching their opportunity, insinuated themselves into the strictly feminine portion of the bridal cortège, not only angering but seriously alarming the Greek women.

"What are these strangers doing in our midst?" they screamed out indignantly, and called upon their men for rescue from a danger which the darkness of the hour enhanced.

A scrimmage of serious nature was only arrested by the earnest intervention of the priest. It takes very little to fire the hot Eastern blood, especially where religious fanaticism is always the dominant chord of the emotions.

Next morning a member of the chief Christian family in the town was walking with a friend near the serai when he was confronted suddenly by one of the Metawilehs who had been concerned in the church episode.

"You put me out of the church last night," he shouted. "Take that this morning," and he struck the Christian bey in the face. Then he took to his heels like the wind. He was promptly caught, however, and clapped into prison.

Immediately the fat was in the fire, burning and

spitting finely. For this act of open violence towards a distinguished townsman was at once regarded by the Christians as ominous of bad feeling emanating from high authority in the Metawileh ranks behind the delinquent. They declared that he had been incited to overt defiance and insult of a purpose.

Several telegrams were promptly dispatched by the head Christians to high authorities of the Government in Damascus. Not a Christian tradesman but closed his shop on that morning of the outrage, not knowing what disturbances would ensue. In fact it was impossible to buy goods anywhere, as the majority of the shop-keepers in the bazaars were of the Greek persuasion.

The news spread rapidly. A message came privately from Zahleh—a stronghold of militant Christians bristling with a righteous indignation at the slight put upon their community—that, at a word from Baalbek of any further insult, two thousand men were ready to set out and burn a neighbouring village belonging to an important Metawileh, in retribution for the monstrous outrage.

The attitude of the people of Baalbek was expectant, tense. They awaited they knew not what. For the most part the Metawileh were overbearing and aggressive, feeling themselves the stronger party, yet recognising a superior force in concealed support of the numerically weak rival. As for the Christians themselves they stayed up till long past midnight in their houses, fully armed, dreading an attack at any moment from their implacable enemies. In this anxiety shared the inmates of the hotel, for the host was a Greek and a Christian.

While it was still dark next morning, two carriages passed out of the town at rapid speed. Many others followed between dawn and seven, for forty Christian families had resolved to leave Baalbek that day and as many again the following day. With them would vanish temporarily the trade of the town.

And what a dawn was that, followed by a sunrise which should have ushered in a millennium, not a rumour of bloodshed. Golden clouds and haze effused with gold covered the eastern sky. Pure and serene, from the framework of grey slim poplars rose the pillars of the Acropolis on a background of every tone of rose and pink. The shadows of night slipped like a slowly descending curtain down the mountains of Lebanon as the rising light of Aurora tipped rosily one peak after the other, gliding over the summit, revealing every indentation and mark on the surface, radiating the whole with effulgent pink flush, till it gradually dropped over the whole barrier of hills with transfiguring brilliant effect.

Below in the gateway of the hotel sat two soldiers, while a boy in a fez made notes on paper at their bidding as each carriage in turn passed out of the town. A large deputation of Christians had set out to carry their grievances to Damascus.

At a council of war held before this faction set out on its mission it transpired later that the old bishop of the Greek Church in Baalbek had advocated peace. He stated that their sovereign, the Sultan, desired Moslems and Christians to live in peace and unity, that it was

their bounden duty to smooth the rough dispute, to make at once for reconciliation.

The aggrieved party got up and desired the bishop to sit down, saying that he himself would speak. He then expatiated at length on all the various wrongs and slights suffered by Christians, reminded his audience how continually they were being imprisoned on the slightest charges, how they could not even raise their voice to a Metawileh without receiving a blow in reply.

At the end of the long heated speech the listeners got up with great excitement.

"Let us go! Let us go!" they shouted, gesticulating wildly. "We will set fire to the church, for our bishop is of no account."

They were only calmed and reassured by the decision taken subsequently that representatives headed by the bishop should go at once to Damascus to interview the Wali, or governor-general.

During the couple of days these men were absent matters somewhat calmed down, though the undercurrent of antagonism was still strong, and emotion was strained by the numerous exciting reports continually floating about the town. It was said that a large body of Maronites had come from the hills down to Der-el-Ahmar —a Maronite village three hours' journey to the north of Baalbek—declaring they had heard of the disturbance and were ready to go to the succour of the Christians. A few rode on to the town to ascertain the correctness of the report that the head of the Christian beys had been killed. For the rival side rumour asserted that

fifty lances had been discovered in the courtyard of the chief Metawileh one morning, planted there by a body of three hundred Metawileh, who had ridden silently and secretly into the town at night, to show their alacrity to rise at his command on his behalf. Two of this body rode past the hotel in broad daylight, fully armed for action.

A wedding on one of those days of suspense afforded some distraction. The festivities took place in one of the houses to be viewed from the hotel balcony. The young bridegroom was a Bedawi, and when he rode up on his gaily prancing horse accompanied by a number of friends, great shouts and ululations of joy greeted his advent. People ran forward from all sides, racing across the garden to the house, and flocking thick as bees up the outside staircase to swarm on the terraced roof.

The women were dressed in long dominoes of every colour drawn up over the head. The men wore their multi-hued kumbazes and flowing abbai. The whole was a glittering and moving mass of figures in colours of gold, red, blue, and brown. The music and the clattering of the dance were audible from afar.

After a while the bridegroom again appeared. He descended from the roof, mounted his horse and rode slowly and importantly up the street followed by a crowd of long-veiled women uttering piercing cries of joy.

Two days later both the Christians and Metawilehs were agog, anticipating the return of the deputation from

Damascus. The manner of their exit had been hurried and secretive. Their entrance was to be a triumph.

About two o'clock a Turkish officer with a native soldier (in flowing robe, full pantaloons, keffiyeh, lance in hand and gun slung over the shoulder) rode down the street. A succession of soldiers in pairs carrying lances of great length followed at intervals of every few minutes, and then came a soldier on a splendid bay from which he sprang exactly opposite the hotel, and stood holding the reins as if waiting for another rider than himself.

Finally down the street came on foot an officer with gold epaulettes, the commandant of the local garrison, who was followed by an ordinary foot-soldier leading a horse with a straw saddle. The commandant mounted the waiting thoroughbred, the soldier vaulted upon the straw-saddled horse, and both vanished in a twinkling from sight.

About four o'clock sounds of carriage wheels and horses became audible. The officers and soldiers came into view riding as escort to the two first carriages which appeared. The military commander of Damascus was seated in the first carriage with his second officer in command. In the second were seated the Greek bishop of Baalbek, a venerable, fragile-looking greybeard, apparently of great age, and the head Christian bey of the locality.

Behind followed half a dozen other carriages filled with the members of the deputation that had set out three days earlier to bring their complaint to head-

quarters. From all sides of the Christian quarter, men and boys ran out to greet them, following in a crowd till they disappeared up the narrow street into the town.

Meanwhile the landlord of the Hôtel Palmyra had been apprised that the two pashas from Damascus would put up under his roof. In an hour they returned from the serai with their military escort, and mounted to the lewan, where visitors at once began to pour in to pay their salutations of homage—officers, Greek notables, Moslem and Metawileh dignitaries.

The commandant was a tall, thin man of commanding figure, and a keen, strong face with marked features, a reddish moustache, and dark hair beneath his fez. He sat on the divan Turkish fashion, his shoes on the floor, but his manner was dignified and reserved ; he was highly intelligent, and considered just and wise in judicial decision. It was rumoured, be it confessed, that he could neither read nor write, but he had the reputation of being one of the finest officers in the service, was universally respected, and also dreaded, for he was not only just but far-seeing.

His colleague, the second in command, was grey-bearded, almost white, and wore spectacles ; in manner he was abrupt and imperious. He was a man of education and a clever writer.

The commandant came to the determination, after hearing statements of the whole position from the heads of both factions, that it was necessary to go through all the judicial cases with their verdicts for the last two years in order that he might judge for himself if justice

had been accorded impartially to Christians and Moslems alike.

During the nine days that ensued the lewan of the hotel was the most animated spot in Baalbek. When the pasha was not at the serai, he was holding debates and receptions in the lewan, and when these were concluded whole bevies of beys and effendis remained to assist him in his favourite recreation of card-playing. When this same recreation was pursued with a zest and vivacious accompaniment of conversation until the small hours of the morning for several nights in succession, the English and German guests of the hotel ventured to put in a mild word of protest to their host, M. Mimikaki. With a complacency not altogether expected, though certainly its courtesy was appreciated, the pasha at once made a point of retiring to another part of the hotel with his whole following, cards and all, as soon as the ordinary guests had withdrawn to their rooms for the night.

I am reminded by the artist that it was perhaps another case of the one touch of nature—fellow-feeling—that suggested this consideration. We also had played cards in the lewan when alone, and on one occasion were deep in a game when the pasha and his friends came unexpectedly upon us. The pasha urged us to complete our game, backing with sportsmanlike vigour the lady's play, though patently sceptical of the result in her favour. By a happy chance, victory fell to the lady's lot, but the amaze on the part of the onlookers was more ingenuous than flattering to the sole

representative of her sex at that time in the Hôtel Palmyra.

As soon as the reconciliation between the heads of the two religious parties ensued after the pasha's intervention, and the masses calmed into their ordinary neutral bearing, another excitement stirred up general interest. This was in connection with an experiment, a daring engineering feat connected with elevating the keystone of the arch of the great portal of the Temple of Jupiter. This keystone had dropped some two yards or more in the great earthquake of 1759; but was arrested in its fall by the two lateral blocks, one on either side. For many years it had hung in a truly precarious position, the eagle forming the lower part, and holding between its talons a thunder-bolt and a key, presenting a pitiable and helpless emblem of the downfall of the mighty temples. For some years past masonry constructed to prevent the complete downfall of the stone had concealed the symbol of Jupiter from view.

Now all this was to be altered. The German architects, skilful, enterprising, and experts in their profession, conceived the idea of replacing this keystone of the arch in its original position. After weeks of preparation in advance, the memorable day on which the actual undertaking was to be taken in hand arrived.

By the courtesy of the German gentlemen, who had already given the artist every facility in their power for painting within the Acropolis, we were invited to be present on the great occasion.

CHAPTER XIII

DAY OF RAISING THE KEYSTONE OF THE GREAT PORTAL OF THE TEMPLE OF JUPITER

A SKY of peerless blue, an atmosphere clear as crystal ushered in the eventful morn. The six great pillars of the Acropolis were shining like burnished bronze against the scintillating background.

The artist climbed for his subject to the roof of the Arab citadel which is opposite the façade of the Temple of Jupiter. I remained as spectator, half-way down, among the giant boulders, the fallen capitals, and broken columns, splendid in their downfall, which were heaped in a gigantic bank directly over against the great portal. From the wide trough at the foot of the slope, worked by the excavators through accumulation of many centuries of débris, mounted another bank of similar nature, burying half the pillars and the doors on either side of the portal once serving as entrances to the side porches.

This small Temple of Jupiter has its walls still intact, and their inner surfaces are in a state of wonderful preservation. The strength and skill of the methods of ancient construction are proved by the stability of whole masses of architecture in the Acropolis, which still remain standing though crumbling with age, and in spite

of having suffered on so many occasions through terrible convulsions of nature. The colour of the temple was a golden-brown ; many of the huge stones were indented and cracked but knitted as closely together as when first put into their place. The whole structure is considered the best preserved and most beautiful of ancient temples in Syria.

The appearance of the pronaos, which once held two rows of six fluted columns, with a noble flight of steps mounting from their bases to the great door, can best be understood by examining the picture of this special point of interest, called " The Temple of Jupiter." The splendid portal with its imposing and rich proportions is the gem of the building ; the modern masonry which held the keystone from further downfall was like an ordinary wall filling up the whole entrance. The doorposts, however, were in view, forming a border, elaborately sculptured with vines, garlands of flowers, ears of corn, and figures in miniature bearing branches and clusters of grapes.

Part of the masonry had been removed to make room for the four pillars of the iron elevator ready to be set in motion to raise the keystone, which was no less a weight than twenty-six tons. Workmen in Arab costumes stood in readiness on either side of the machinery ; near at hand were the German overseer and also a few European mechanics ; on the ladder in front stood the expert, the master-builder from Germany, who had planned this skilful though perilous undertaking.

A string of privileged townsfolk with a few of

their wives filed in and between the strewn boulders and columns. Among them was the wife of Mr. Michael Alouf, head dragoman of the Acropolis, whose knowledge and keen appreciation of the ruins and their environs are embodied in an interesting little work called the *History of Baalbek*, published in Beyrout. The head-shawls of the women, of white, pink, or black hue, and the red fezes of the men, the excited workmen moving hastily to and fro, all combined to bring movement and local colour into a picture of more than passing interest.

And now the pasha himself, with his customary following of beys, effendis, and soldiers, appeared unexpectedly on the scene. As he advanced leisurely through the débris an Arab youth was dispatched at utmost speed to fetch chair and stools for "His Excellency," who had condescended to take interest in the uplifting of the great stone.

Then ensued a breathless pause, a hush that could be felt just before the signal to begin was given forth after all those long days of arduous preparation. The Arab navvies at work in the trench, freeing with their pick-axes the débris of centuries from the bases of the columns, paused and stood like statues to watch with eager, bronzed faces the starting of an operation which created in the mind of every spectator a seething anxiety.

"All together!" came at last in resolute voice of command. "Quite evenly!" and then promptly began the slow, smooth action of four small handles, two at either end of the long iron bars running through the

four iron pillars which were fixed between the top of the lintel and the masonry below.

"Slowly!" "Stop!" "Go on" (Yellah!). "Easy!" "All together!"

One order followed the other in rapid succession the whole time, shouted or spoken calmly according to the demand of the situation. Now the stone appeared to move. Yes, it moved! It moved! But "Stop!" came in stern command, for it seemed to be moving forward and not upward. "Yellah!" the critical moment had passed. Round went the handle-bars worked by the excited Arabs. "Slowly! evenly! all together! Stop!"

Now rose a shrill chorus of shouts from spectators and workers alike. The first space between the iron levers and the wall beneath became visible. The experiment was working successfully. Overhead, standing on the keystone itself between it and the broken architrave, was stationed a man whose watchful eye from above was to guard against undue friction or uneven elevation. Inch by inch was to be gained with long breathless pauses between to reshift the masonry and massive blocks supporting the levers which were raising the stone.

Two yards had to be conquered in this way. Half this distance was achieved in three hours' time, but with every inch gained, difficulty increased as fresh support had to be built beneath to prevent the bare possibility of a sudden slip or accident of any kind through failure of part of the machinery. The operations conducted after this necessarily cautious method

took three days to complete, on account of the long intervals employed in strengthening and building up the wall beneath.

From the top of the Arabic citadel we both watched proceedings on the following day. There was a certain attraction about the savagery of this dilapidated fortress, the oldest of the fortifications built by the Arabs within the Acropolis. The top story was non-existent except in the shape of circles of huge stones, which lay scattered on the second story like a fallen Stonehenge. The ascent to this point of view was particularly difficult as the staircases were in part destroyed, but the panorama of the ruins and the whole environing landscape was more than compensation for the labour of attaining to it.

The tall poplars of the gardens waved breezily on a level with the parapet. Straight ahead were the noble columns, still preserved, on the south side of the peristyle, where they support, with the two fluted columns of the pronaos, a superb coffered ceiling. Between these and the cella could be seen the leaning column, and a dainty, delicious peep, as through a glorified picture-frame, of the hills and plain beyond.

Far away, north and south, stretched the rich, red burnt plain, like a long-swept wave deepening in intensity of colour where the lines of the horizon touched the turquoise sky. The sun was mounting high to the zenith, and "there was nothing hid from the heat thereof." Everything in view blazed and sang and scintillated with matchless colour. The sound of hammer

South Peristyle of the Temple of Jupiter.

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upon the stone, of axe upon the rubble, vibrated through the whole area of the Acropolis, as if in the days of construction centuries far back—in the days of the golden age, the Saturnian age.

But where were the builders? Where the one-time fervent worshippers of Jupiter, and the great and shining light, which still searched out every crevice and corner of its ruined shrine? "Wrecks of another world than this." Only Nature remained changeless in her very mutability, the dumb confidant of all that had been, the keeper of the world's secrets still untold. From the blue of the Syrian sky, from the heights of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, she seemed to be watching with her everlasting eyes the eager, wistful delvers, who sought to wrest from these relics of antiquity the hidden treasures of vanished eons.

The attraction of the Acropolis dulls, to a certain extent, the interest taken by travellers in other examples of ancient architecture worth visiting in the town. Tucked away in the modern village, and not easy of access, except through the private doorway of a house, stands a beautiful little temple, built in semi-circular form, and still in a state of excellent preservation.

Around the cella runs a peristyle with six beautiful monolithic columns, surmounted by Corinthian capitals, elaborately and exquisitely sculptured. Between these columns there are shell-niches on the wall of the cella, and the emblems forming part of their arches show the patron goddess of this temple to have been Venus.

Over one hovered the dove of the goddess, on another she was shown emerging from a shell between two small cupids. The star-pointed shape of the structure, with one of the beautiful columns at each point, can be seen in the picture painted of this interesting subject.

The doorposts of the stately portal of this shrine were large monoliths. Until the excavations also made here, under the direction of the German archæologists, the imposing flight of stone stairs leading up to the temple was completely buried beneath débris and mud. No one, indeed, had any notion of its existence, as the accumulations of centuries had mounted as far as the bases of the shell-niches. Now there runs around the building a ditch deep and broad as a moat, showing the platform of massive stones, and the broken dilapidated steps of the once splendid ascent to the shrine of the goddess.

There were no altars to Love under the ancient cult that did not tend to the exercise of its visible empire on the devotees to its worship. So it is not to be wondered at that according to Eusebius, the people of Heliopolis of the Phœnicians—meaning Baalbek—worshipping Venus under the name of Hydon, grew effeminate and superstitious to a degree. The fame of the orgies attending the ceremonies of festival and feast became so widely celebrated that the temple was closed by order of Constantine the Great, who also converted into a basilica for Christian worship the great forecourt of the Temple of the Sun.

There is a local legend to the effect that St. Barbara

THE TEMPLE OF VENUS, BAALBEK.

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suffered martyrdom in connection with this same Temple of Venus. To this day Moslems and Christians alike call the ruined temple El-Berbara, and to confirm their story of its transformation from a shrine of the goddess of love into a Christian church, they show on the interior of the cella a Greek cross painted within a circle.

Not far from this Temple of Venus there is a large mosque now in ruins. Originally it was a church dedicated to St. John, but when the Moslems conquered Baalbek they made of the Christian place of worship a mosque which became famous. The three rows of fine columns still standing are of themselves worthy to be visited, especially as one of the rows is composed of eight immense pillars of red granite which stood originally in the vestibule of the great Temple of the Sun.

To Baalbek, as to so many even of the remote places of Syria, knowledge has penetrated of the greater freedom existing for individual enterprise in countries beyond the blue Levant, beyond the jurisdiction of the Turk. Emigration, especially from the Christian quarter, has been frequent. But the Syrian once abroad ceases not to hanker after the place of his birth. Distance throws a glamour over the drawbacks of penury and labour he suffered in boyhood. When he has amassed ever so small a capital, he will return with a song on his lips, and a pæan of thanksgiving in his heart, and try to engraft the shoots of his new experiences and wisdom on native soil.

He builds a house and enlarges to his friends on the attention and interest he created in the world all unknown to the man who has spent his life on the spot of earth where he came into existence. Often enough there comes a reaction. He finds himself cramped, hedged in, in all his undertakings. Not a tree can he plant in his garden without adding to the taxation already pressing hard upon his little all. While dreaming over his nargili he sees in painful vision the probable vanishing of all his hard-won gains. If he be a Christian, the limitations are increased. The position he covets for himself is given as a matter of course to the Moslem.

For the woman who returns with her husband after sharing his labours in a far-off country, be it America, England, or Australia, to which country many of the Baalbek folk have flitted, disillusion is still more rapid. Too easily she has slipped into the customs and enjoyed the liberty of the woman her sister in lands of the unveiled. In the land of the harem and veil she makes discovery that she has lost her place, nor has she the smallest inclination to creep in and find it again. But the anomalous position she is forced to content herself with, a status granting neither freedom nor seclusion, becomes equally irksome. She falls a prey to depression and monotony, regretting unceasingly the lost flavour of that liberty she had once tasted and found good. To women such as these the ladies of the foreign missions who settle in their town or village often become the true friends in need.

It was a case of the kind I had in mind as I ascended the hill behind the town to take one last survey of the beautiful prospect at sunset the evening before we came away. Near the summit I met the object of my meditation, and we sat down near each other on the grey rocks at the edge of the slope. Only the ordinary salutation of the passer-by had passed between us, for it was not the woman herself I knew, only the story of her lot. She sat down embracing her knees, staring with vacant eyes into the distance, as though weighed down by a dull and unintelligible depression.

The sun was hidden in part behind a streaked stratum of thin cloud sweeping round the horizon. Through the delicate grey layers it suffused a yellow lustre like the reflection of its own rays on the sea, and made a golden pathway down to the opposite mountain-ridge, which was edged with the same bright yellow, the colour of ripe corn. The hill-line rose beneath the setting sun with a magnificent curve, swerving abruptly to the foot-hills, behind which towered the distant mountain-peak of lofty Sannin surrounded by a grey sky which had one broad veiled streak of orange merging from it into the golden sun-path.

A mysterious blush of purple crept along the extended hill-range towards which stretched the burnt-up soil of the plain. The woods were silent and expectant, awaiting the magic instant that would transmute their uniform deep green hue to the brilliancy of emerald. Half a mile from the town, a little distance away from the high-road, shone the mirror-like face of a pool.

People walking on the road below looked like children. The clatter of horses' hoofs rang out at intervals ; a shout from the workmen in the ruins sounded clear and loud.

The golden path in the sky was now blotted out ; subdued light deeper and stronger filtered through the clouds. Light appeared to be struggling into the warmth of a brilliant after-glow, but in vain—the gold tarnished and suddenly faded, leaving a chill lavender sky that seemed an image of the monotony of life.

The woman near me dropped her head into her hands as though consciously or unconsciously affected by the symbolism touching her own life so closely. With a sudden movement as if imbued with a fresh spirit of courage or fortitude she again raised her head and looked directly westward.

Lo ! A wonderful transformation ; the greyness coming to life. A tender venetian red was tingeing the spreading film of cloud, the purity of its tone growing warmer in hue though never brilliant. It was a type of hope revived represented by the repeated surprises of one of Nature's own pictures.

The colour, subdued and delicate, faded to palest salmon on the upper layers of cloud, which extended south in immense curving lines, while the broad masses spread out again from south to east. Above them sailed the new moon, her golden crescent lightly veiled by the airy cloud-fringe. The hills changed to deepest purple, the western sky darkened to the hue of burnished copper. It was the last outburst of colour before relapsing to the same cold grey as before.

Simultaneously we rose to our feet. The night was upon us. The woman passed down the hill before me. Early on the following morning we left Baalbek, imbued with the feeling that we had said good-bye to one of the rare spots on God's earth of which the sun seemed the eternal guardian, and from which even the Turk's injustice could not banish its beauty.

And yet it was under Turkish jurisdiction that the Christians of the town were even then being justified in their resentment against Metawileh insolence.

CHAPTER XIV

LEX TALIONIS AND THE BATTLE OF THE WINDS

IN all parts of Syria the ancient law of retaliation, or blood-revenge for the life of a kinsman, still maintains a potent sway over the minds of the people, whether Christian or non-Christian. It is evident that even in the days of the Mosaic dispensation it was so deeply rooted in the customs of the various Oriental tribes, settled or nomadic, that the famous Lex Talionis was but embodied in the great Levitical Code for the purpose of setting a limit to vengeance. It is one of the terrible features of this vengeance that when the man-slayer has been caught and killed—whether his original crime was committed in self-defence, accidentally, or on purpose—the obligation then shifts to the opposite side, which in its turn exacts vengeance for the fresh life taken.

This creates a vendetta which goes on unceasingly between opposing families, chiefly of different tribes or sects. If the murderer himself cannot be found or in any way reached, then the blood-revenge can be exacted through another member of the same family. In a word, any and every member of a family, women and children exempted, can at any unguarded moment be made the scapegoat for the crime of a kinsman, once such a feud

is started between his family and another. Thus it has often happened that the husbands, fathers, and the grown-up brothers of the antagonistic families, from one generation to another, have lived an existence of daily danger of their lives, a peril which they were constantly seeking to shun.

On the other hand, it is often considered a sufficient compensation in these days, at any rate for the accidental killing of a man of one tribe by a member of another tribe, to receive a sum of money, in other words the blood-ransom, and also a wife from the family of the murderer. This alternative has gained weight in many districts, partly through the dislike to begin fresh feuds so disadvantageous to family prosperity, partly through the repugnance of the Moslem to take life (unless of an unbeliever), a repugnance which will hold back his fingers itching to snatch at the ever-ready knife in his girdle, while hurtling upon his adversary in a quarrel the lengthiest and direst anathemas the tongue of man can let loose in any language under the sun. There is no doubt that the tragedy in the Lebanon, already alluded to, was rendered bloodier and fiercer by the opportunity of venting the revengeful feelings of long-standing feuds which had been rigorously dammed for many years by stringent measures of the enlightened and famous Emir Beshir.

It was under conditions of a slackening sense of the obligations entailed by this ancient law of retaliation that the following drama was set in motion, and finally worked to a climax of tragedy by the influence of

exterior elements of nature acting through the physical senses upon the fatalistic propensity of the Oriental.

For three interminable days the khamsin had blown hotly over the highlands of Lebanon. Vegetation was parched, dumb creation gasped in distress, humanity collapsed into inertia of brain and body. With the passing away of the fourth night a scarcely perceptible change crept into the life-emptied air.

A man sleeping on the roof of his cube-shaped hut lifted his head with the gesture of a beast scenting rain after a long drought.

"Allah be praised!" he muttered. "The wind from the sea."

In the chaste subdued light of dawn every outline of the sun-baked mud roofs of the village, the massed foliage of the mulberry-groves, the silhouettes of the poplars, and the vine-clad stony terraces of the hill-slopes were clearly defined. The ravines and valleys hidden between the tiers of mountain-ridges, which formed a majestic amphitheatre round this upland village, were marked every one in its place by a striking phenomenon of the early morning.

The hidden depths were filled to their mountain rims with snowy foam of mist—mist in its purest form unsullied by taint of urban smoke or dust, ethereal and motionless, like arrested waves or airily piled masses of spectral, translucent snow. The wind, scorching as dragon's breath, that had blown incessantly through the night, was calm and restrained.

For a moment the man's sleep-drugged gaze wandered over the prospect, then with quickly sharpening mien, he turned and peered over the side of his hut to the large stony space of flat ground below the bank. Recollection had arisen of the tinkling of camel-bells introduced into the dreams of his laboured slumbers.

To whomsoever was familiar the name of Hassan the goatherd was known the incubus of a vendetta which had oppressed him for several years, also the perennial and acute interest stirred ever to life in an ordinary flaccid mind by the sound of camel-bells.

It was Hassan's brother who had been killed—inadvertently, with no evil intent had sworn the aggressor's kinsmen—in a quarrel springing up between the two herdsmen brothers and a Bedawin grain-trader of the Hauran, who passed near the village with camels laden for the Beyrout wheat market.

Not once, however, since that day of doom for his brother had Hassan met his enemy actually face to face, notwithstanding that he had made a laborious journey into the Hauran for the sole purpose of demanding the idemnity it was his due to exact in lieu of the drastic alternative of Lex Talionis.

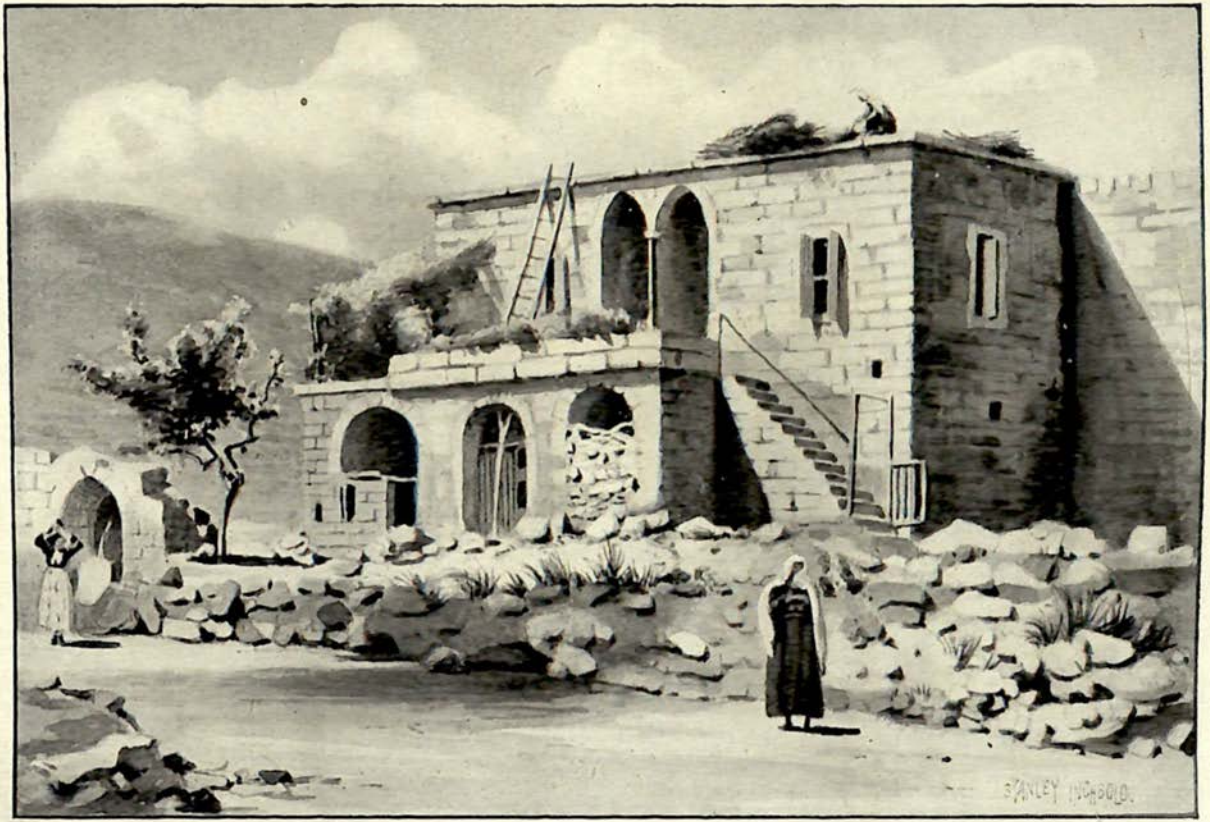
Surety had been duly given him for rendition of the blood-price in a stated course of time, but the far-away Bedawin camp was distant from the highland village of Lebanon a journey of many days. Procrastination, that staple element of Oriental transactions, readily developed. Messages innumerable and menacing had been entrusted to the caravans which passed to

and from the Hauran through the village. Many of these for a long time back had given the vicinity a wide berth, changing their route to elude the inevitable stormy altercations with Hassan and the zealous partisans of his just claims.

Yet even the kinsfolk of Hassan turned round at last to taunt him with an unjustifiable phlegma in fulfilling the sacred obligations involved by his intimate relationship with the victim of the Bedawi's rage. These attacks never failed to fire Hassan to display of a mighty indignation. Yet still he delayed. He was a poor man with a family to support and always put to sore straits for subsistence during the hard winters of highland Lebanon. The indemnity he and his wife felt assured of gaining eventually would be of more value than the unprofitable shedding of blood, which would only revert the flow of vengeance upon himself and his whole family.

The months of waiting slipped into a year, season merged into season, until now, when this particular khamsin had burned irritability into men's minds after exhausting and poisoning the very life of the air they breathed, four summers had passed away, and still the death of Hassan's brother remained unexpiated in any shape or form.

At sunset of the previous day Hassan, wrought to a state of tension, had sworn to a group of scornful villagers by the most binding oaths of his religion that once the grape season was over he would again set out for the Hauran, and, without waiting for vindi-



A DRUSE HOUSE, MOUNT LEBANON.

cation of the failed pledge, fall upon and exterminate every male of the house of his foe.

This morning at dawn he looked down from his roof and saw through the pallid light a group of recumbent camels. At the foot of the terrace bank dropping sheer with his house-wall lay a couple of Bedawin drivers motionless in sleep as the dead.

One of them lay on his back, upturning to full gaze of the onlooker above the face of the brother of the murderer.

"It is the will of Allah plainly revealed," muttered Hassan, dumfounded, yet fearsomely elate. "This is a sign undoubtedly that to the charge of this man who has lied to me from the beginning is to be laid the sin of his brother. Verily into my hands direct has Allah under the veil of night guided his footsteps. This moment will I go down from my house and slay him where he sleeps."

While he fumbled in his girdle, his eyes red and fiery with awakened lust for a prompt vengeance, a child's whimper sounded from the house beneath him. Hassan's searching hand had found what it sought and the fingers tightened on the bossy hilt, but of a sudden his will to withdraw the knife from its sheath halted, the tense ferocity of gaze slackened. He raised his head to glance furtively around on all sides. The alteration of mood implied a wavering, and mingled with it a secret undefined hope that no other eye had observed this opportunity placed before him by destiny of meting due and drastic justice.

Not a human soul seemed to be astir or even awake in the nest of low buildings yonder as Hassan surveyed the outlook with suspicious, seeking gaze.

Just as his restless look of indecision withdrew from the houses, the mist filling the deep, broad valley immediately below the village began to stir and glide gently forward. Like the moving scene of a gigantic white wall it advanced, opaque, perpendicular, tossing out, like feelers groping for the groove in which to guide its course, airy, whirling wisps of diaphanous haze. Its upper border was alight with a pearly iridescence, and it coiled and curved upward and onward in wraithlike shapes, which augmented in rapid movement as the whole vast cloud of mist uprose from the valley and travelled to the east, making steady, silent headway against the subdued air from the desert.

Speedily the vapoury emanations scattered and rose to weave their filmy fibres into a pallid veil that spread over the pure aquamarine of the morning sky, hiding from view some clouds sailing white and aloof through lofty spaces. As the mist approached and came in contact with the eastern hills, which closed in the upland valley, the wind of the desert blowing insidiously downward whirled back the airy snowy masses in such fashion that the low denser portion of the wall of mist continued its advance, while feathery streamers and huge detached tufts of vapour were driven backward above in vapoury chaos.

Hassan's agitated gaze was arrested, then held, by

the unique spectacle of this phenomenon. Again came the whimpering cry from beneath his feet. His youngest born was feverish and fretful after the dry scorching heat of the three preceding days.

And now the west wind began to blow with strong gusty breath, driving the mist before it right up the eastern hills, scattering it between the pine-trees which crowned the summits, and swiftly screening them from view. Over the western mountain-tops, flushing the stagnant heat strata of the gulches and vales, blew the conquering air from the sea, cool, vital, refreshing. Stealthily to meet and oppose it the scorching desert breath stole down the eastern slopes.

Another look charged with hatred and fear threw Hassan on the face of the man whom he so strongly desired to make the scapegoat for the brother's deed. Then with elbows akimbo he squatted on his heels and set himself intently, expectantly, yet doggedly to watch the conflict of the winds enacting before his eyes in the deep wide valley below the village.

"I will take it for a sign," he said to himself. "If the desert prevail, then will I let him go, for he is desert born and his ignorance was born with him. If the wind from the sea drives the khamsin back to its furnace in Eblis, then will I kill him. For it will be the duty imaged to my sight and decreed of Allah."

Now the whole panorama of hills and vales was immersed in sea mist. Untiringly the volatile vaporous masses sweeping upwards from countless recesses of the great mountain chain whirled into the contest. Weird

and fascinating was the struggle for pre-eminence. For between the opposing currents of air was trapped the mist and driven hither and thither at their will, now one prevailing, now the other, while each in its determined struggle to thrust the other back tossed the mist sky-high in gigantic spiral masses. It was an image of the human will whipped hither and thither in the contest between good and evil, between the aërial battalions of Yezad and Ahriman.

In suspense almost unbearable the man on the house-top stared distractedly before him. Which would prevail, the desert or the sea? One instant he clapped his hand to his girdle only the next to withdraw it in haste. Below in the shade of the bank the Bedawin woke not from their torpid slumber. They had travelled too far in the dust and enervating heat of the khamsin to be lightly roused.

Suddenly rose Hassan to his feet.

With a rushing onset of victorious bluster the west wind swept by, bearing the mist tumultuously onward till again the hill-slopes and pine-crested ridges were blotted alike from the landscape.

With the haste of a man who dares not delay lest resolution should swerve, Hassan descended the steps from the roof to the terrace. Thence he crept noiselessly down the precipitous track of the bank towards the sleeping man, with the stealth of the primitive hunter stalking his unconscious prey.

"In the name of Allah! what hast thou been

doing?" ejaculated a woman's shrill voice from the penumbra of the interior as Hassan suddenly appeared in the doorway of his hut, his eyeballs starting out of his head, the knife in his hand a suggestive witness of some fatality underlying his acute agitation.

"At last I have taken the blood-price of my brother's life unlawfully withheld and now given into my hand by the decree of fate," said Hassan, bending forward into the hut and hissing the words in a whispering, penetrating voice.

"Madman! Then hast thou ruined thyself and thy whole household. Fly before it is too late or thou wilt be discovered," threw back the woman. "Oh, Hassan! Oh, Hassan!" she moaned, as she put down on the matting the child at her breast and darted to the door, whence she watched the man swing down into the roadway and vanish quickly from her sight.

Down the road he fled, instinctively bent upon making his way to the rocky recesses of ravine and hill below the village. Through them and beyond, by secret tracks trodden only of the goats, already he had definite idea of penetrating to the big town on the sea-coast.

His heart was curiously light, albeit he knew not when again he would return to his home. The burden of years had fallen from him, for what he had done he was convinced was ordained of Allah. A day had come when his neighbours and acquaintances would say of him: "Hassan is a man! He has avenged his brother. He always said he would do it."

If only he could have hearkened to the words of

praise with his own ears, but he knew what his wife had meant by her prompt warning. The law of the hated Turk and Frank would intervene to visit with drastic punishment him who adhered to the enactment of justice as understood by the forebears of Hassan, and therefore by himself.

One regret alone attended the perpetration of his act of retaliation—that it was the brother, not the murderer himself, who had been delivered into his hands. But who was he, asked Hassan the goatherd of himself, that he should set up his own desires in opposition to the sign plainly demonstrated by the issue of the battle of the winds?

All at once he stopped running. There was suspicion, a piercing almost frantic inquiry in the way he dilated his nostrils and snuffed the air as he came to abrupt halt.

Above the eastern hills still wrapped in mist a new force had entered the plain of aërial activity. With this the west wind now had to reckon. The mist grew light in one particular spot which spread rapidly, the light behind growing brighter, intenser, penetrating and scattering the mist until through a grey transparency the lost outlines of the ridge and dark hillside slowly evolved.

But before the morning sun pierced the last filmy barrier of mist its shimmering orb vanished behind a cloudlet suspended above the hill. The cloud became an island of tender lavender hue afloat on a lake of

And of a sudden the sky cleared, the mist fell away, slipping northward over the mountain-tops, and sinking westward into the cloudland of fog still prevailing dense and opaque in the depths of the gullies and valleys. Overhead the glistening veil rolled from the zenith earthward, unfolding again the azure spaces of heaven with the far-away clouds unchanged.

Hassan turned his face to the east. As one surprised then paralysed by some untoward happening he stood riveted to the spot. Then, as though impelled by an instinct stronger than sense, he cast his gaze forward.

On a spur of rock projecting over a descent dropping sheer to the torrent at its base sat a man on his heels, his back to the road. An agal thick as a rope clipped a black keffiyeh to his head. With the sudden movement of one under the magnetism of a strong gaze the Bedawi turned to view his swarthy face, and at once beheld the distorted, aghast visage of Hassan the goatherd.

With a quick guttural exclamation he sprang lithely to his feet. The evil he had calculated to elude by avoiding the village where his caravan had been forced to halt upon this journey to refill their waterskins had come forth to meet him by the way.

On the instant that Hassan recognised his enemy he also knew for a certainty that he had given too hasty an interpretation to the sign given him by fate. For the air now playing on his cheek was warm and languorous.

He turned and fled precipitously, and as he ran

with confidence abandoned, mocked of destiny and a prey to torturing terror, he ceased not to curse himself and the deception of the winds.

For now the pursued would become the pursuer.

The wind of the desert had conquered.

CHAPTER XV

THE ROOTS OF LEBANON

IN the neighbourhood of Beyrout, situated within a few hours' drive up the terraced slopes of that splendid background of the Lebanon hills, there are many favourite summer resorts of the residents on the plains and of the city. From every one of these sunny villages is to be viewed the same exquisite panorama of sea and plain, a living picture of permanent beauty ever before their eyes.

To these pleasant resting-places, such as Areya, Aleih, Ain Anub, and others, there are good carriage-roads—on which diligences also ply in summer-time—which wind upwards, doubling like serpents upon themselves, now passing through pine-woods and vineyards, now creeping along the brink of some deep ravine with the rocky-bedded river glistening far below, almost hidden by the thickly foliaged banks. Handsome villas have sprung up everywhere in these hill resorts, with wide terraces, and shady verandahs, painted and shuttered with contrasting colours, as in Italy, adding to the sunny and rich effect of that Eastern atmosphere and blazing light.

The flourishing Druse village of Esh-Schweifat lies some six miles south of Beyrout, about two miles from

the coast on a low hill of the lofty background. It is a delightful drive, almost parallel with the sea, though at a distance of several miles, with a great forest of olive-trees intervening between the road and red sand of the strand that is characteristic of the Ras Beyrout. This great stretch of olive growth is worthy of note, as it is the finest in the country, and so extensive and unbroken—nine miles long—that people have been known to lose themselves in the multiplicity of tracks which all bear so similar an aspect.

Esh-Schweifat itself is picturesquely posed on two ridges sloping to the plain with the fertile wadi of the same name dipping between the Christian and Druse quarters of the village. The Druse houses, showing their pillared entrances and outside staircases, were massed thickly on the narrow descending spur across the gorge, the glittering roofs, terraces, and numerous palm-trees, silhouetted with the effect of old ivory in the green against the deep blue of the sea and the richly clad plain. The aspect of the whole village was peculiarly Oriental, the abundant flora and richness of shrub and fruit growth enhancing this impression.

Some thirty years ago schools for Syrian boys and girls were established in this village by Miss Proctor, a lady who acted in the matter of providing a means of education for the intelligent youth of Syria independent of any of the missions established in the country. From the terrace of the school buildings situated on the top of the ridge over against the Druse quarter was a beautiful view over the Christian quarter, the

garden-like roofs, the palm-trees rising between, huge cactus growth with yellow blossom tipping the grotesque-shaped fingers, and pomegranate trees brilliant in scarlet bloom.

Brummana and Bet Meri, two other favoured resorts, are perched so high on the amphitheatre of hills looking down the great plain of Beyrout and St. George's Bay, that the villages look like clusters of dolls'-houses, or of white boulders, and the pines crowning the ridge as diminutive as those of a Noah's ark. The drive is about twelve miles, and full of beauty and interest. The first three miles wind across the level through mulberry-groves and orchards of every description, hedges of cactus, and of tall maize growing luxuriantly. Then begins the ascent, twisting and coiling back upon itself, with pine-trees on all sides, but never too dense or high to conceal the view, which extends and broadens the higher the carriage crawls.

Bet Meri is reached first on the ridge of the hill. With the small native dwellings of the villagers are interspersed modern villas of every description, with bright-hued sun-shutters, deep awnings, vine-covered terraces, and anything and everything that man can devise to adjust the conditions of a Syrian summer to his own demand for air, and protection from the glaring heat.

The road continued along the ridge; on the one side we looked over plain and sea, which appeared to rise high in the sky, and on the other into a grand valley called the Wadi Salima, with precipitous sides descending to invisible depths. High on the distant

slopes, where the great ridge opposite dropped abruptly, revealing the junction of another great wadi with the one below, to form together the deep bed of the Beirut River, we could see the villages through which we had passed a few days earlier on the railroad journey from Zahleh to Beyrout—Ain Sofar, Behamdun, Aleih, and so forth, all showing with distinct outline through the wonderful clarity of atmosphere on the grand mountain-flanks.

Brummana—a contraction of Bet-rummana, or house of the pomegranate—was only two miles distant. The situation is one of the most beautiful that could be found in any country or clime, and the air delightful after the heat in Beyrout, still most oppressive though the time was the end of October. The sea is eighty miles to the horizon and that faint, far-away shadow quivering on the softly blending horizon of sea and sky is Cyprus. To the strand below it looks but a mere walk over the pine-wooded peaks and slopes, past the little bright-roofed hamlets dotted among the green down to the water's edge.

Beyrout was far away to the left on a flat promontory (the Ras Beirut) looking at night like a fairy city with its shimmering lights all merging into one soft phosphorescent mass, only the lamps of the Pharos shining clear and apart from the rest.

We happened to be alone in the comfortable hotel and found the solitude a luxury in such pleasant surroundings. The basement of the hotel was high, raising the spacious terrace which ran along the front of the

THE RAS-EL-METN.

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building so far above the high-road that dust from the traffic of many vehicles did not annoy.

Brummana was in the district of Lebanon called the Metn, and the headquarters of the Quaker Mission. The principal of these schools there, with his wife, had stayed in the same highland locanda as ourselves during the great summer heat, and now that we met them in their own home they gave us valuable aid with every friendly courtesy in visiting points of special interest in the vicinity.

Ras-el-Metn, the castellated village crowning the ridge of the Metn seen from the road between Brummana and Bet Meri, was the goal of one day's expedition. It was the most important Druse stronghold of the Metu district, containing an old castle, of which part had been converted into the local station of the Friends' Mission. We started for Ras-el-Metn at seven in the morning by carriage, with the usual team of three horses for the mountain roads.

The first point of interest to be seen from the road was the monastery of Marshaya, or St. Isaiah, viewed on an eminence to the left. It is an hour's ride on a donkey to the summit, but the view from the roof, of which the monks of St. Isaiah are justly proud, is well worth the trouble it takes to obtain.

Baabdat was reached in less than an hour, and was a place of some importance with a few fine residences, the summer resort of more than one high government official. And then the road seemed to run mad, climbing one hill and falling down the valley, then labouring

and twisting upwards again, passing the wildest, loveliest, and yet, in every respect, weird scenery imagination can conjure up. We went through several small villages, and noticed silk factories which seemed to be actively working. They were on the borders of the well-cultivated district of the Kesrawan, where there are still many flourishing silk manufactories in spite of the big annual export to Marseilles of the raw silk and the silkworm cocoons. Time did not allow us to halt on the way and enter the workshops to see how

> The silkworm's wondrous tomb,—
> The bright cocoon unrolled,
> Shines on the weaver's loom
> With silvered threads and gold.

For nearly three hours we kept to our carriage and then alighted, for the road went across ravines and hills to Hammana and Ain Sofar, while our destination was away on the rugged broad ridge jutting out like a promontory between the two deep wadis of Hammana and Salima, which united at its base to form the River Beirut (the ancient Magoras), in winter a raging torrent, but then a parched rocky river-bed. Then came a long walk of very stiff and rough climbing on foot to the outskirts of the village, where we were met by the friend who had seen our approach from afar.

The village itself was of great length, stretching along the crest of the ridge, and on an eminence dividing one-half of the houses from the other was the ancient Druse castle, once the residence of emirs or princes of the Lebanon. Parts of it had been renovated and added

to, also re-roofed with red tiles, which were fortunately scarcely discernible when viewing the pile of buildings as a whole.

The entrance was from the east after a gradual ascent. The foundations below were vaulted with deep archways, now shut in with iron gates and door, but formerly open and leading to stabling and store-places beneath the castle, also to a domed, dark chamber, rough and chill, into which prisoners were once thrust and the heavy door fastened upon them. Flights of steps from both sides led up to the entrance, a deep archway opening upon the court, which was surrounded by small buildings, and doors conducting to the various rooms of the castle.

On either side of the whole framework of masonry composing the entrance was an arch constructed of alternate layers of white and yellow stones. One of these arches had been picked out and restored to the appearance of new stonework ; the other one was mellow with age and opened upon a small blind passage, which extended beneath the square tower, marking the apex and centre of the castle front.

In the tower was a chamber, formerly, no doubt, the special guest chamber of honour, and used even now as a visitors' room. It was approached from within the arch by a flight of broken steps. The door was massive, ancient and carved. On the wooden shutters of the deeply recessed window was also carving of a rough arabesque design. There were small arched apertures at intervals in the walls for the ensconcement of hand

lamps, and one deep recess extended half-way to the ceiling like a broad deep shelf, upon which in former times the bedding would have been piled during the day.

The ceiling was wooden, and for beams had solid trunks of trees at intervals of a foot. Curious rustlings had often been heard at night in the unexplored heights of the roof above the tree-stems, accompanied by the "sizzing" sounds that one connects with snakes. The walls all through the castle were of immense thickness, the doors solid, and wherever there was original wood-work appeared also the rude arabesque scrolls of carving.

Curiously enough, there was also a small ruined Maronite chapel within the castle enclosure, which almost suggested that at one time the Christians had been in the ascendency at Ras-el-Metn, or that the reigning Druse emir of the period of its erection had chosen for some secret, political or religious, to feign the religion antagonistic to his race. It was approached by a descent of steps from one of the courts, and had an altar of stone at the other end of the interior raised above the floor.

The Christian quarter of the village was at the head of the ridge, divided from the Druses by the castle. The houses of the Druse quarter were of solid build; massive stone edifices, with substantial foundations, no windows at all on the ground floor, but on the second story were stone terraces, colonnades, and the customary arches of the Lebanon native house. No more strongly built houses had we seen anywhere in that part of Syria, and the martial, fierce-browed aspect of those vigorous

Druse mountaineers of El-Metn was in character with their habitations.

Our friends took us during the afternoon to pay a call of ceremony on the chief Druse of the quarter, a young sheikh who, though he would have felt slighted at the omission of this call from strange visitors to the village, bore himself with a hauteur and reticence of mien that signified the great condescension of his kindly welcome. On the other hand the head man of the Christian community, a member of the Greek Church, was urbanity personified, even to the extent of sending later to the Druse castle a beautiful Arab mare for the use of one of the ladies over the rough track back to the carriage.

And truly it was an awful track, the donkey on which I was mounted being compelled in several places to spring from rock to rock. It was a miracle its rider did not come to sad downfall, for she had no bridle, but fortunately an excellent saddle that had been kindly lent for her use by the hospitable hostess of the Druse castle. It was dusk when we reached the high-road where the carriage was waiting according to the time arranged, and as there is little or no twilight in those climes it was pitch dark, except for the starlight, before we had been half an hour on the road. It was very uncanny in the deep valleys, and climbing the sharp bends of the road with the mountain heights on one side, and dense, impenetrable depths to gaze into on the other side, the carriage light piercing the blackness ahead, but increasing the deep umbrage everywhere else.

The first rains were now expected, and their close approach was heralded by a sirocco of more than ordinary violence that visited the whole Syrian coast generally. At Beyrout there was a sandstorm. From the mountain heights we could see the uprising of the sand from the dunes that skirt the city for several miles, see it whirling in gigantic spiral columns and clouds, which were blown in tempestuous scurry out to sea. Next day came the welcome rain, and the whole of the following night was a continuous storm of pelting rain, tropical rain, and thunder, lightning, and hail, a variety of all sorts of barometrical surprises during the watch that one was compelled to keep owing to the appalling noise battering overhead, against the walls, on the terraces, and over the land generally.

Then came a showery day, upon which occurred a curious phenomenon of nature that is sometimes seen in the Levant.

The plain and city of Beyrout lay in deep shadow. Beyond the darkened shore stretched a red-purple wide expanse of sea, bounded on its outer edge by a wall of cloud that dipped to the water and reached and melted upward into an upper stratum of cloud-shapes, extending high up the vault of the sky.

It was a rain-wall, giving the effect of sea and sky, drinking of each other's bounty.

The statuesque cloud-shapes on high stood out from a vaporous background suffused with a deep purple-red hue that penetrated the grey veil. Along the horizon, softly remote, the clouds dwindled, leaving an area of

clear sky, only to rise again like an ascending mountain-range to majestic height, with its ridge and peaks facing the west, coloured with salmon and deep rose shades.

Straight to the horizon at the end of the rain-wall extended a sea of steely grey. With steady motion the barrier of cloud moved landward over the deep crimson sea in front of it, drawing fresh water in its advance. Against the hill which crossed the western foreground, viewed from the terrace of the hotel, the gold of the sky was intensely brilliant, while above there floated a cloudlet of gossamer lightness, gleaming and golden.

The rain-wall touched the shore. The next moment town, plain, and the distant hills were completely shrouded in a slanting, driving, streaming rainstorm. Then followed superb weather, fresh, sweet, and mild as an English May or early June.

CHAPTER XVI

LORD OF THE DANCING FESTIVALS

ONE of the finest points of view in the neighbourhood of Brummana was from a Maronite monastery occupying a site of antiquity on a spur of the hill, which bends round sharply into a highland promontory at a slightly lower altitude than Bet Meri. The site is a prominent one, even when regarded from the plain, and on account of its commanding position was chosen, no doubt, for the erection of the temple in olden times.

The road to it branched off from the main road at the foot of the straggling village of Bet Meri. After the lapse of a few minutes' ride we saw immediately to our left one of the plain, square buildings with a simple, modest belfry on the flat roof that in the Lebanon districts are at once recognised as Maronite churches.

This church happened to be one around which many fables had been woven. Day and night the portal is left open, so that whosoever has inclination to enter as he passes may not lack opportunity to fulfil his devotional exercises. Should a thief go by and be induced by the temptation put in his way to stray within on

plunder intent, the hand which he uplifts to snatch away the gold or the silver ornaments in the shrine, or to take money out of the box placed for voluntary contributions, becomes instantly withered or paralysed. Such cases have been known, say the people, as they make with emphatic gesture the sign which shields their own person from the shadow of the same crime. Deadly peril lays in wait for the daring, or too inquisitive dog, or any other beast that, taking advantage of the open door, strolls in and pollutes the sanctuary with its bare presence.

To the side of the little church, with a cleared space all around it, there grew a big, sturdy oak, of the small-leaved species (*Valonia*, if I am not mistaken). The trunk was massive and solid, the strong roots grasped the earth like grappling-irons, but one of them had leaped far out beyond its fellows and burrowed into the soil, forming itself into a low, rugged arch exactly high and broad enough to admit man or animal passing beneath in a crawling posture. The earth near and beneath was cut up, scattered, and trampled upon as if this feat of grovelling had been recently performed.

It was a freak of nature at which we gazed, a freak that by a further freak of that part of nature—called human nature—had been endowed by the superstitious with a certain miraculous power. Rheumatic pains of any and every description dropped by magic out of the aching limbs of the Christian, Druse, Moslem, or any other willing believer who voluntarily, and with the necessary faith, crept in all humility underneath that

arched root of the oak-tree. Ocular demonstration of the working of the miracle was, of course, all that was lacking to my prompt acceptance of a Syrian mode of healing that seemed to bear a certain kinship to the therapeutics of Christian Scientists of to-day.

The road came abruptly to a close just beyond the church, and a pathway, rugged and stony, after curving along the slope, suddenly mounted in steep ascent towards the monastery, Der-el-Kala. Everywhere lay heaps of stones. The whole of the hill was covered as though with the remains of a devastated town of which all the houses had been pulled down, or destroyed by earthquake, until not one stone was left standing in its rightful place upon the other.

Small live oaks and a few olive-trees worked their way through the stones that lined the path on both sides and lay scattered over the whole ascent. At a period unfixed by any direct or certain date this hill with its prominent crest was spread over with houses, constituting, it can well be imagined, a favourite suburb for the wealthy inhabitants of ancient Beyrout. Easily can imagination also picture the hill as a stronghold, a place of refuge, for family, wealth, and worship, at a time when pirates from the north were wont to sweep down the coast and burn and plunder towns and villages easy of access on the seaboard.

Right on the flattened summit of the hill stretched the ugly modern erection. It was a new, straight building with a tiled roof, having the same aspect as an outbuilding belonging to an English country house, and

behind it was a second house with a flat sun-bleached roof. A short spell of precipitous climbing, and then the path led round between low walls to the other side of these buildings, bringing into the range of vision the church of the monastery, which was larger than the one near Bet Meri, but of the same order of construction.

To our left a door stood open conducting into the humble, whitewashed cloisters of the monastery, lined with low doors over which were painted in colours the Arabic numerals of the cells. A young monk, unshaven, and bearing the aspect of one taken by surprise, appeared before us in a black cassock girdled with a broad leather belt, the symbol of purity of life worn by the members of this monastery. Everything that came before our sight as we were conducted from one spot to the other was of the simplest, plainest order.

A rugged flight of stone stairs led down to the kitchen, rough and austere, half open to the air, where a large cauldron of water was being heated over a fire on the stone-paved floor. Beyond was another door opening into the refectory, where at the moment of our entrance the noonday mess of pottage was being served out by a monk who sat in the corner on the floor. A huge black cauldron, smoking hot, was in front of him, also a big pile of soup-plates, of which several were already filled and ranged on the floor by his side. Two bare tables flanked by wooden benches constituted the sole furniture between those whitewashed walls. Though these primitive ways were, doubtless, based in great measure on the manners of the country, there

always seemed a singular appropriateness to the true spirit of their environment in the simplicity and often asceticism of daily habit constantly encountered in these Syrian monasteries, rough and uncultured though many of the inmates may be.

A few relics of the ancient ruins lay scattered in the flagged yard beyond the kitchen, here a prostrate column, there a broken pediment. We retraced our way up the steps and through the cloisters, turning at the end of them into a second colonnade which ran the length of the new part of the monastery with a fresh row of cells to the left. The open side overlooked a court, unkempt and overgrown, with a circular well and windlass in the centre. Upon inquiry we were told that there was an ancient well within the precincts still undiscovered, in spite of diligent search and excavations.

The interior of the church was plain and clean; the decorations were insignificant and tawdry. On both sides were several small altars or shrines adorned with tinsel lace and candles, but the chief display of ornament and candles was reserved for the high altar. An abundance of small pictures in ordinary black frames were suspended on the walls.

Overhead, slung across from one side of the church to the other, were criss-cross lines of thin rope. From these, muslin bags hung down, filled with the eggs and chrysalides of the silkworm, held in safe keeping for the following mulberry-tree season. Whether the custom of turning the church into a winter depository

A Rocky Height of Mount Lebanon.

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for the silkworm eggs comes from the idea that no securer and drier store-place could be found anywhere for the safe-guarding of these important sureties of every successive year's livelihood, or whether a special blessing is supposed to be invoked by the sacred nature of their environment, is not evident, but in other places of the Lebanon the same practice can often be observed.

Into the walls of the church, strangely enough, also into the adjoining house, were built stones which bore ancient inscriptions. A workman's name with the number of a Roman legion was rudely carved upon one of these. The lowest sections of two massive pillars faced the exterior of the church ; the base of a third was still in evidence, and another was partly visible built into the wall of the monastery. In the stony débris covering the bank below the terrace a fallen column lay half concealed.

Beyond the church were the well-preserved walls of the ancient temple rising to the height of an ordinary parapet only, regarded from the exterior. The enclosed area between the walls was considerably lower, and in present cultivation as garden and orchard for the monastery. According to the lay of the walls the temple had faced the plain of Beyrout at a point where the remnants of its columns still defied the despoilment of time and human vandalism. The edifice had been a hundred and six feet long and fifty-four wide. The portico had once possessed a double range of pillars six feet in diameter.

Local tradition maintains that Der-el-Kala, like the great temple of Baalbek, is an ancient Phœnician temple, and that this statement is verified by the antiquity of the great drafted stones, some of them fourteen feet long. But as it appears from various sources that Beyrout was of no importance in the Phœnician period, that what there was of it was destroyed under the rule of one of the Greek Seleucidæ, and that the Romans after conquering Syria rebuilt the town, colonised it, and beautified it, as was their wont, with many fine buildings, it seems more credible that the Romans were also the founders and builders of the ancient temple of Der-el-Kala. One of the Herods (Agrippa I.) spent a great deal of his time in the town of Beyrout, or Berytus as it was then called, and it is within close range of probability that he often visited the beautifully situated city on the height of Der-el-Kala, an altitude escaping much of the moist heat of the plain, and rendered further attractive by the temple dedicated, according to an inscription found in the ruins, to the "lord of dancing festivals," Jovi Bal Marcodi.

Now this same lord of the dancing festivals, or lord of sports, is said by more than one authority on Syro-Phœnician and Roman gods to have been identical with Baal-Berith, the god worshipped by the Phœnicians not only at Baalbek but in Beyrout, Byblus, and by the Israelites of old. Many of the mysteries connected with the worship of Baal have remained hidden beneath an impenetrable veil, but visible witness long remained of the festivals, dancing and otherwise, held in honour

of other gods at those same sanctuaries that were dedicated to Baal. The Syrian Astarte—the Ashtaroth of the Hebrews—was worshipped in Beyrout and Byblus, the two important centres of that part of the Lebanon; she was represented as a woman standing on a crescent moon, and to the Romans she personated the goddess Juno.

It was to Adonis, however, that the highest honours of religious festival were accorded from Byblus down to Beyrout and all the hill districts above the sea-borders in between. "Holy Adonis, holy Byblus" has been found inscribed on ancient coins, testifying to the sanctity and high importance attached to the worship of Tammuz. At Der-el-Kala, no less than at Baalbek and other Syrian centres of pagan worship, did the "lord of the dancing festivals" preside, from the people's point of view, over the feasts of Tammuz held twice every year.

A little distance south of Byblus (the modern Jebal), the River Ibrahim, sacred to Adonis, which is its ancient name, runs into the sea. The quantities of red iron-ore washed into the river from its source by winter storm and flood dye the waters a deep reddish hue. To the ancient worshippers of Adonis the red colour signified the blood of the god which mingled with the waters when he met with his tragic death in the fall of the year. In sympathy with the sorrow of Venus over the death of Adonis all the women of the Lebanon, of Beyrout and Byblus, used to go in procession to their temples, or to the river-banks and the sea-coast,

to lament as at funeral obsequies over the mournful fate of Tammuz.

At the fête held in the springtime they celebrated with songs and joy-cries the return of Tammuz from the grave. Adonis, their love, had risen from death, was the burden of their cries; he had risen in the spring with the birth of the flowers, the budding of the trees, in all the power and strength of his beauty. To this day, in places where these religious ceremonies were firmly grafted in the life of the people, women gather together on the second day of Pentecost, preferably by the sea or on a river bank, to make festive holiday. All the rivers of Mount Lebanon were held sacred in those ancient days, and temples were erected near them, but the River Adonis had the chief reputation for sanctity. At its source in the rocky and wonderfully picturesque heights of Afka, anciently Apheca, was a very famous temple of Venus which met with the same fate at the hands of Constantine as its sister shrine at Baalbek.

> Tammuz came next behind,
> Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured
> The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
> In amorous ditties all a summer's day;
> While smooth Adonis from his native rock
> Ran purple to the sea, supposed with blood
> Of Tammuz yearly wounded.

Near Der-el-Kala there are still traces of an ancient aqueduct with stone tubes, called by the inhabitants "Kana Zobeida," or the channel of Zobeida, who was the wife of Haroun er Raschid; it is supposed that water

was brought to the temple and city from a spring called Ain Arrar, about four miles distant from Brummana.

A walk to the end of the projecting hill-spur, and along the ridge of the opposite slope, brought into full view the grandeur and importance of this elevated site. From one side the eye looked over the great plain of Beyrout, the deep blue of the Mediterranean, and a portion of the ancient Phœnician plain with the peaks and slopes of Northern Lebanon climbing and ever climbing one above the other skyward.

The grand wadi of Salima yawned deep and wild on the other side of the hill, with the roots of the massive mountain-ridge of Ras-el-Metn anchored boldly in the abyss, and its deep purple slopes culminating above in the castellated village bearing the same name. To the north-east, far away in the distance were seen the pale pink heights of Sannin and the snowy peak of Keniseh.

Beauty and strategical value those people of old knew well how to combine, in such skilful manner, too, as to bring their love of æsthetic pleasure into line with practical necessity for self-defence. And now the splendid pagan sanctuary, the Roman-built villas, were a mass of débris, among which grew at random prickly gorse, scrub oak, and the pale cyclamen. Close to the ruins still flourished an oak of tremendous growth, and sitting beneath its shade were two aged monks studying at their ease the manner in which their inquisitive visitors made close survey of the monastic property.

The lord of the dancing festivals was laid low, the moon of Astarte had risen and set, the temples of Venus

were in ruins. On their site was planted at Der-el-Kala, as in many parts of the Lebanon, the standard of the Cross, though in many of the so-named Christian shrines the images and saints placed there would with difficulty be distinguished by a resuscitated Phœnician from those of his own pagan deities.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BROW OF CARMEL AND ITS MONASTERY

NEARLY forty years ago a German colony established itself under the brow of Mount Carmel close to the little Syrian town of Haifa. The "Templars" community to which they belonged was the outcome of a religious movement in Würtemberg which evolved new principles for the development of an ideal social life founded upon the prophecies of the Old Dispensation. Like many other propagators of a new creed or sect, the founders conceived the notion of transplanting their new community to the Holy Land, hoping from this ideal centre of the highest religious life to reform the whole world.

Whatever they may or may not have done for the world at large, it is certain that they have been the making of Haifa. The first glimpse of the fresh-looking German suburb after rounding the promontory of Carmel gave an impression of prosperity and home. The new and somewhat garish colouring was relieved by the abundance of trees and shrubs, and above all by the rugged flanks of the massive hill background of Carmel. The sparkling suburb curved round the golden lip of the exquisitely blue bay of Akka, and merged with

pleasant and not too harsh contrast into the grey-toned massed buildings of the old town of Haifa, while scattered on the rising ground behind were villas and native houses, with cultivated and uncultivated spaces between, divided by stone barriers or cactus hedges.

In fact Haifa, instead of being, according to travellers of the past century, the dirtiest, most uninteresting town in Northern Palestine, its streets almost impassable for filth and refuse, the bazaars poverty-stricken and of no account, the inhabitants wild and suspicious to a degree, has developed a status that may end in its becoming the chief port of the Levant, now that the new railway has been opened. Enterprise, industry, and thrift on the part of the Germans have made it what it is. A not unnatural rivalry, amounting even to jealousy, has roused the native, spurring him to set his own quarter in order, so that a stroll through the streets of the old town is no longer repulsive to the casual pedestrian.

Haifa boasts of two piers; one is a jetty of stone jutting into the sea at the end of the finest street in the German colony; it was built in honour of their Emperor's visit to the Holy Land, but was never used officially after all, on account of that unseasonable sirocco of twenty-one days' length. The other is in the old town, and is the landing-stage for passengers and cargo of the Austrian Lloyd and other steamers which call regularly at the port. Immediately outside the custom house there is a block of buildings to the left, containing post-offices of various nationalities, also a brightly

painted native hotel with a series of galleries and outside staircases decorating its exterior.

It is to the right, to the German colony, that the wise traveller turns his course, taking one of the carriages choking the cobbled roadway, and driving westward. He will go past the old fort or castle which has been converted into the barracks of the town, across a small square, by several lively cafés, up a narrow street lined with shops, into a fairly good road running parallel with the sea; he will pass several residential houses walled and gardened, and finally enter the neat, fragrant boulevards of the pretty German suburb.

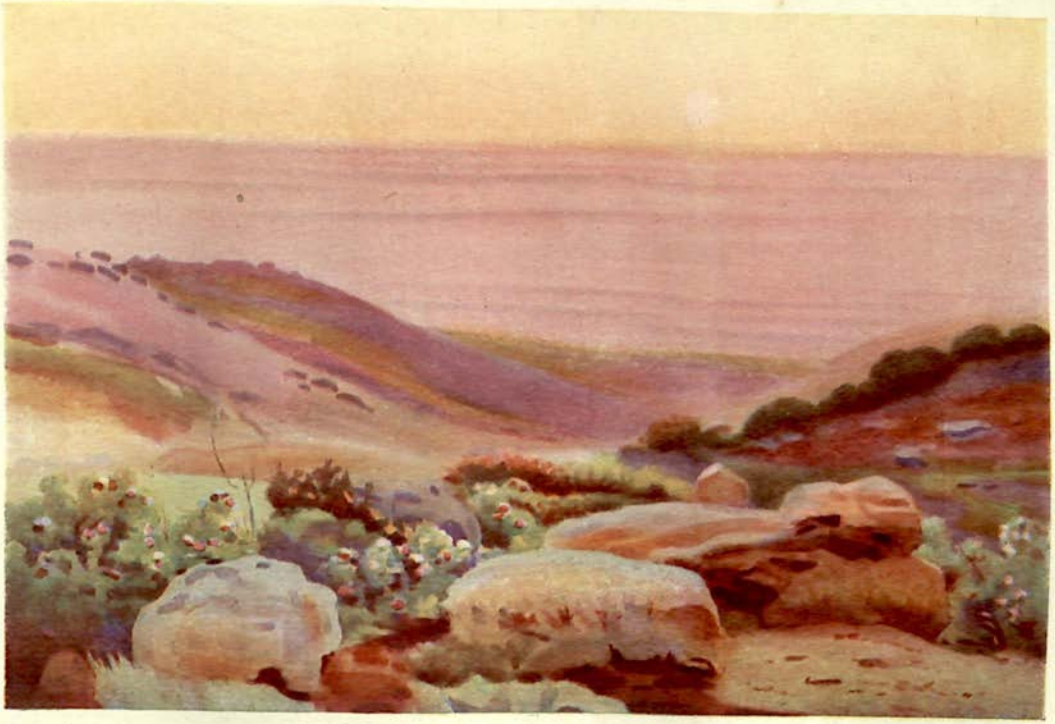
Sweeping round the corner of a large square building with trees casting welcome shadow around, the carriage stops abruptly before the door of the airy, well-kept hotel of the Kraft family. If he be fortunate in arriving at an opportune time, when the house is not overcrowded, he may be able to obtain a room with outlook over the beautiful bay, where he will see Akka shining like a multitude of marble blocks massed together on the distant horn of the amber crescent of sand.

It was the early spring—the middle of February—the beginning of that ideal season which transmutes the rocky barrenness of the wilderness into a garden, and the fruitful land of Galilee into a floral paradise. The rugged slopes of Carmel drew us towards them like a loadstone, up the sunny street, lined with trees both in green bud and flower. Behind flower-rich gardens stood the peaceful German homesteads. Other roads,

smiling and floral as this, ran in parallel lines to the base of the hill, or intersected them at intervals. The impression received transplanted us in imagination to the garden towns of California, particularly as some of the houses were built of wood, though red-tiled roofs were the rule and not the exception.

Out of the colony we walked on among the olive-groves skirting the foot of Mount Carmel. The ground was uneven and rough; corn seemed to be sown in every available spot between the trees, thrusting forth whole forests of emerald spears in defiance of the stony soil. The trees were for the most part thickly leaved, and the whole grove presented an ancient but picturesque appearance. The trunks were aged, gnarled, and in some cases of grotesque formation, hollowed, with stones filling up the cavity to hinder the complete decay. A few fine old veterans near the houses had even been padded with cement to prevent the utter collapse of the trunk shells.

The ruined posts of an old gateway, still showing niches that once held holy water or images, lured us between their landmarks of a buried past to a steep disused path, overgrown with grass and herbage, while the underwood on either side tried hard to bring their sprawling tendrils and boughs into irrevocable entanglement. The hillside was covered with undergrowth, small carob or locust trees, dwarf live oak and of larger growth, while cistus bushes showed their first pale roses, and a variety of wildflowers were in blossom. Scattered anemones glowed scarlet and purple between



SUNSET OVER THE MEDITERRANEAN, FROM MOUNT CARMEL.

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the bushes; little carpets of pink campion spread themselves gaily between the rocky spaces and the scrub.

This disused track soon merged, near a second stone pedestal with niche, into a pathway in present use ascending to the summit by an easier gradient. The view on looking back was striking, the haze of the sirocco having assumed every shade of pale pink and deep rose round the horizon, while the whole outstretched bay was of the hue of pink lavender. The red, white, and grey of the town stood out strongly against the background, and the green of the corn-tracks stretching over the plain beneath as far as the promontory was most vivid.

Above rose the monastery of Mar Elias and the lighthouse, which is a beacon of note in that part of the Levant. We skirted the boundary wall, not without some laborious climbing, keeping the sea to our right as we rounded the hill and sat down on boulders in a savage, highland district gazing at the sunset over the Mediterranean. Between the rocks around us a tall, strong lily, with a full blossom of orange hue, shared the graces of floral beauty with the pink-petalled cyclamens, both flowers growing everywhere in lavish display.

Below us was a wadi, one of the many fissures of Carmel's sturdy flanks, and doubtless one of the gorges into which the plague-stricken and those sick unto death of Napoleon's army descended and lost themselves, upon hearing they were to be deserted by their comrades, left to be brutally murdered by their deadly enemy

the Turk. Perhaps it was in that same wadi dipping down from our feet, rocky and overgrown with thick brushwood, that they strayed aimlessly among the boulders, expending the fictitious force which had spurred them thither from the monastery, and finding instead of the coveted rescue a surer refuge in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Their bones now rest beneath the shade of the French flag in a cavern outside the monastery gate, topped by a small memorial pyramid.

With the famous monastery rising so near, thought then wandered to the generations of intrepid men who had held their own on Mount Carmel for so many centuries—held it in defiance of persecution, pillage, torture, death, held it as "holy ground" throughout the ages, with the tenacity of the valiant few who climbed the steep ascent of the mountain of the Lord, mocking the brandished steel, drinking the cup of woe, caring for nothing, recking little so long as they could keep in sight, even from afar, the blood-red banner of their faith.

The Carmelite order of monks claim Elijah (Elias) as the founder of their order, and give forth, in apparent good faith, their conviction that the brotherhood has remained unbroken in a chain of direct succession through the whole of the centuries since. No less than seven popes have given their seal to this statement in writing.

Certain it is that the natural grottoes on the west slope of the shelving promontory overlooking the boundless horizon of sea and sky were lived in by anchorites anterior to the Christian era, and from times immemorial

the aborigines have revered the cavern in which Elijah is believed once to have dwelt. A large cavern is shown to-day by the Moslems, close to one of their cemeteries on the slope of the hill. It is the famous cave where Elisha is said to have instructed his successors, the "Sons of the Prophets," and called now the "School of the Prophets." The interior within the rock is about forty-five feet by twenty-three, and the height quite eighteen feet. Legend also asserts that the Holy Family rested in this grotto on their return from Egypt to Nazareth.

Pythagoras, five hundred years before Christ, when engaged in studying the mystic lore of the East, is stated to have dwelt for a time among the early hermits of Carmel. As the religious element was the strongest factor of his system, and prophecy and divination the special gifts to which he laid claim, it is not improbable that the ancient philosopher evolved on Carmel—the mountain of oracle, of sanctuary, of prophecy—some of the secret religious doctrines that contributed to the ascetic, disciplined, and elevated tone of the brotherhood founded under his system.

Hermits of the Christian age continued to haunt the grottos of the "Mount of God" until, in the twelfth century, the period when Akka was the chief landing-place of the Crusaders, they began to be regarded as a distinct order of monks, taking their name from the locality to which they had attached themselves. Directly they established a reputation that was peculiarly Frank and Christian, they began to be persecuted in real earnest

by the Moslems. At one time they were so weakened and down-trodden, almost to extermination, that their church was converted temporarily into a mosque. The monastery was frequently plundered, and in consequence of their association with the French flag during the invasion of Syria by Napoleon, they were considered untrustworthy at the time of the revolt in Greece. The ruling pasha of Akka caused the buildings to be destroyed in case they might again harbour the enemies of the Sublime Porte.

The modern buildings, with the domed church in the middle, form an imposing landmark on the shelving promontory, about five hundred feet above the sea. They were rebuilt about sixty years ago, and have been greatly added to during intervening years. The number of monks from nine or ten has only increased to eighteen and sometimes twenty during the same duration of time. The monastery is as much a hospice as a house of monks in these days, and affords clean, airy apartments with hospitable diet for travellers, who made it their chief resting-place before the German hotels in Haifa had been established. From the terrace the sea is viewed on three sides, also the hills of Galilee, and as far north as the snows of Hermon and Lebanon.

In the church behind the high altar is concealed the famous cave of Elijah, which with mallet and chisel has been bevelled into a small chamber. On a side altar is a rudely worked carving of the prophet's figure, overhung with votive offerings of the pilgrims. The native pilgrim journeys likewise to the shrine of Elias and the

cave of Elisha, both of the prophets being counted among the revered saints or welis of the Moslems. A building for their accommodation stands apart, to the north of the monastery.

The traditional visit of the Holy Family to this rocky height has made the Carmelites honour the Virgin Mary as the special patron of their order, so much so that they are also known under the name of Brothers of the Holy Maria of Carmel. A chapel dedicated to the Virgin has also been erected on the mountain.

A walk, not on the same evening, taken around the whole walled enclosure gave the impression of a well-guarded fortress. We had ascended by a different foot-track, mounting through the terraced vineyards of the slope into the carriage-road leading to the monastery. Down to meet us from that hill of Mary came a black-robed nun riding slowly on a donkey. Her face was thin and pale, but bore a sweet, introspective expression. With absorbed manner she half responded to our salutation, and then with veiled eyes fixed ever in the distance rode silently on—silently as was her wont, and that of her companions dwelling in the strong, iron-gated convent of the Carmelite Sisters standing close to the seashore near the head of the bay. With sealed lips these silent sisters dwell behind the blank high walls of their prison-like home, for all but one day in every year. Then are they allowed to speak to one another or to any one who may accost them, but so strong is the habit of silence thus rigidly imposed that silence even on that one holiday seems the fitting attitude of

mind for the pale, lifeless, and sad faces. This one day of all the year is spent upon Mount Carmel. I was told by a lady who had been at the monastery on one of these annual outings that she conversed with several of these pathetic-looking nuns, and ventured to put the question as to whether they had real faith in the righteousness and use of such a life.

They replied in the affirmative. There was too little prayer in the world, they said, and lives devoted to praying for the good of others, and for those who did not pray for themselves, could not but be blessed and bestow blessings undreamt of, unknown, but real. The explanation was not convincing because of the resigned sadness of their tragic faces.

From the monastery we returned, and followed the road which curved round at the summit and then ran straight on towards a small German settlement and an excellent summer hotel standing in full view on the ridge across a deep valley to our right.

The land around was in process of cultivation, still very much in the rough, as though reclaimed with labour from the earlier neglected condition. Men were working in the vineyards, and busy elsewhere with the plough. The road had a wild border of coarse grass, flowering herbage, scrubwood, and stretches of wall built in the ordinary way of piled stones and boulders. Round the head of the wadi we turned and saw at once the striking position of the hotel.

Carmel stretched ahead in rolling hills with shadowed dales and deep ravines between, suggesting the fertility

and seclusion of the "forest of the fruitful field." It was an impression that was not put to the test on the spot, but on a later expedition made over the whole length of that broad, luxuriant backbone of the mountain-range.

Reluctantly we then retraced our steps and dipped over the ridge into a steep footpath winding along the slope. On the summit had come the first wonderful glimpse of the vast plain of Esdraelon—the Great Meadow of the Arabs—with the distant rounded head of Tabor turbaned in the radiant light of swift-approaching sunset, the light which seems to have given to it the local name of Hill of Light.

Now we looked over the plain of the Kishon, and the marshland bordering the bay of Akka. We saw the winding river of the Kishon, spanned near the sea with its pontoon bridge, and the forest of palms planted throughout the picturesque delta beyond Haifa, bordering the golden strand. While we stood silently drinking it all in, hardly able to realise that these names of the mind had taken unto themselves the substance of reality, down crept the dark shadow of the mountain-side over the whole of the lowland.

The sun had set, and immediately over the panorama stole a weird yet most beautiful effect. The gold of the sands edging the bay faded to a pale seaweed-green, while the plantation of palms and the orchards marking the approach to Haifa deepened in colour to the richness of myrtle. Set in this wealth of green, the winding waters of the brook Kishon and the lagoons

of its remarkable delta suddenly turned lurid—deep red as the blood of grapes, deep red as it may have looked on that remote and terrible day when the blood of four hundred and fifty of the Sun-God's prophets flowed, mingling with its waters to the sea.

CHAPTER XVIII

OLD AND MODERN HAIFA

THAT the site of the ancient Sycaminum is supposed to be in the immediate vicinity of Haifa, between the present town and the point of the promontory called Ras-el-Krum, is a matter of deep interest to some minds, though other travellers deplore the lack of antiquities for visual observation, and pass on to other sites richer in relics of a past grandeur. Those who love to linger in places where imagination is helped by nature, and can find in rock, an aged tree, an ancient well or tomb, the touchstone that magically revives a visionary glimpse of the past, may find interest in strolling over the narrow strip of land that stretches between the Templars' colony and the foot of Carmel.

We began our walk of discovery on the seashore, turning westward from the jetty at the end of the road. The bay was so placidly blue that it was quite impossible to imagine a time when the west wind gales make the roadstead so insecure as to drive all ships unsupplied with strong anchor and cable straight on the rocks or strand. The slip of sandy beach between the dunes and the water margin was firm for walking, and the dark tidal-mark strewn with a variety of shells, like and unlike those on an English beach, while everywhere were

multitudes of small cowries. The rocks were of wave-worn flatness and irregularity of green and grey colouring, showing like miniature islands and breakwaters. They gave one the impression that they were remnants of the ancient city engulfed, and yet ceaselessly striving to give evidence of the secrets their hidden foundations could reveal.

Built into the sand-banks were one or two native houses at intervals, new and yet bearing the mark of penury and the struggling lives of their inmates. Clumps of strong-limbed cactus bordered the garden plots scattered between the dunes, or stretched spiny fingers down to the sloping strand. There rose a graceful palm-tree on the edge of the bank which, close by, had been undermined and washed away by the vehemence of a high or stormy tide, dragging with it a neighbouring palm-tree, which now lay with uncovered roots, its beautiful plumes, faded and rotting, crushed against the sand with the force of its downfall.

Straight ahead, skirting the sea border, was a high, stoutly built wall, which shut in the Convent of the Carmelite Sisters from the rear. Before coming to it we turned aside through one of the apertures in the dunes, and wended our way over heavy sandy tracks between gardens, and through old excavations which had laid bare several ancient rock tombs and vaults, unearthed some Phœnician glass of great beauty and delicacy, and made various discoveries that were considered minor in comparison with the extensive ones successfully carried on elsewhere.

Through an opening in a cactus hedge we passed into an orchard laid out like a garden between the trees, and there came across a remarkable sycamore-tree, supposed by many to be a relic of the ancient abundance of sycamores that gave the name to the city, which is mentioned in the Talmud as also by Greek and Roman authors. It was a tree of huge growth, having many thick branches of curiously gnarled formation spreading out on all sides. But it was the enormous roots that fixed chief attention, extending with great curves, and digging deeply like massive anchors into the soil.

It has been questioned whether the sycamore and sycamine are identical, and for those who imagine that the Syrian sycamore resembles the smooth-trunked, slender sycamore or maple one sees in England, this perplexity is not surprising, especially when it is a matter of proving the accuracy of scriptural statement. It is still more difficult to imagine, as is stated by some commentators, that by the sycamine is really meant the mulberry-tree, for the latter tree has weak, short roots, which can be uprooted with ease, and would on that account scarcely have been cited as a type of the immobility of faith. It seems also conclusive that in sandy, sheltered ground, in the warm lowlands of Lebanon and the valley of the Jordan, the sycamore once flourished so luxuriantly that Solomon, in causing the cedars to be brought to Jerusalem, is declared to have made them "be as the sycamore trees, that are in the lowlands, for abundance."

It was the sight of that huge, hoary sycamine-tree,

growing in the sandy, sheltered plain in the lee of Carmel's head, that brought into the focus of reality the idea of a Phœnician city named Sycaminum, once in tangible, flourishing existence on that very site. We moved away and found an outlet through the cactus hedge which led us by another footpath to the road, which wound half-way around a mere, reflecting in its placid waters the steep slope of Carmel and its banks, fringed with feathery reeds and long grass. Beyond the high iron gates of the convent and the enclosing walls, we turned seawards again and came out upon the dunes, covered with short spring herbage and strange growth of thistle. Tamarisk-trees and shrubs were scattered about, and spring flowers flourished even in this proximity to the sea, short purple irises, and a variety of succulent plants.

Near the point we left the sandy undulating sea-border and made straight for the carriage road which, coming from Haifa, skirts the base of the promontory and winds up the south-western slope to the German settlement on the ridge above. A broad extent of land, half waste ground, half cultivated, had to be crossed. We passed one or two isolated buildings, and had some rough walking before cutting straight into the road below the cliff. Built some distance up the steep ascent in the side of the hill were some native buildings which concealed from view the entrance to the "school of the prophets." Close by was a precipitous foot-track winding up to the lighthouse near the brow of the cliff.

The waves of the open Mediterranean broke lightly

over the pebbles of the low, half-sandy, half-rocky strand, and just beyond a little stone building on the edge of the beach a boat rocked idly on the water. It was filled with natives, who were luxuriating, lazily, leisurely, in the kâf, which they know so well how to enjoy. Their bright garb, white-skirted pantaloons, and scarlet caps, perched at every possible angle on the dark heads, struck the Oriental note of colour and gaiety in the scene. We walked back to the town through the green corn-tracks spreading out in various stages of growth on the flat at the base of the mountain.

The weather did not remain equable. A stifling sirocco set in one day soon, without even a zephyr to circulate the poisonous atmosphere. The afternoon of the third day a high wind rose, blowing up whirlwinds of dust and sand. A sudden smart shower poured down at night, accompanied by one brilliant flash of lightning. The weather gradually cooled, a few rain-showers came, followed by another sirocco for more than the orthodox three days. After this came a complete change in the shape of a good sou'-wester, driving the sea inland in tremendous waves, and making it impossible for passengers to land except through the boiling surf on the boatmen's backs. This little note on barometrical changes is merely interlarded to give an idea of the spring climate in Haifa. We found that it resembled our English April and May months, with intervals of summer heat between the rain-showers.

In February the fruit-trees were all in blossom. This shows the mildness of the locality and the sheltered

situation beneath the broad slope of Carmel. On the heights themselves, vegetation was less forward, and the flowers delayed somewhat, but on the whole everything seemed as advanced in growth as in the two English months mentioned above. Were the distance less between England and Haifa, it is assuredly one of the best adapted and healthiest spots on the Levant for an invalids' winter resort. When the heat increases there are always the breezy uplands of Carmel, and its sea-bound promontory, with convent or hotel as refuge from the enervating air of the plain.

The eastern side of the town has a charm of its own. In passing through the streets it is interesting to turn aside into the sukh (bazaars), though they are small compared with other towns, as much of the trade has been diverted to the shops of the Germans. On the strand, as one emerges from the town, there are many sailing and rowing-boats with the fishermen and sailors busied among them, or squatting in picturesque groups in their shade.

The cafés are side by side with their little forests of rush-bottomed stools, and natives smoking placidly or jabbering in excited argument as you pass. The road descends to the sands, leaving the slaughter-house to the right, and then maybe can be seen a number of boys or young men sitting in a large group on the soft sands, and playing a game that seems the original of hunt the slipper.

The colour of the bay curling round to Akka is blue as a sapphire, the strand is the colour of maize,

while bordering it are undulating dunes planted with a wealth of beautiful palm-trees that is found nowhere else in all Palestine. This plantation is the pride of the town and extends almost over the whole delta of the Kishon, the sand-locked branches of the river forming inland lakes between the graceful trees with clear blue reflections of the sky overhead.

Clusters of bee-hive shaped native huts couched on the other side of the sand-banks among palms and fruit-trees. The plantation thinned and seemed to dwindle in stature as it curved with the configuration of the shore towards the estuary of the river. The evening we wandered thither was superb, and the view of Haifa was certainly the best we had seen. This side of the town had been extended by a Jewish quarter, where many new and striking houses of Oriental structure had been built, trees of graceful and exotic foliage softened the crudeness of colour and newness. Not only this quarter but the whole town, with its garden roofs, flat plain roofs, domed roofs, minarets and towers, blended into one harmonious whole, was transfigured in the gold and rose glamour of sunset against the rugged mountain background.

The situation of the little sea-port commanding an easy entrance into the plains and hills of Galilee was such that, even before the railroad was opened, travellers were constantly passing through. Day by day representatives of every nationality gathered into one community beneath the friendly German roof; American and English, French, Italian, Germans, Russians,

Spaniards from South America, wanderers from India, South Africa, and Australia. They arrived in big parties and small parties; family parties, scientific and archæological parties, or in solitary state with an accompanying cavalcade of courier, dragoman, native attendants, and baggage mules galore. It seemed as though from all the near and distant corners of the earth people of all sorts and conditions were hastening with the zest of the crusader, the faith of the pilgrim, the avidity of the researcher, or the curiosity of the tourist, to sojourn for a while in the Land of Promise, "as in a land not their own," dwelling for the greater part, like Abraham, in tents, and some of them, without doubt, desiring, like him, to dip, by faith, into the future for a vision of the city which hath the foundations whose architect and maker is the Eternal.

Then there were Jews who frequently made this a halting-place in passing from one Jewish settlement to another; Jews of the industrious, self-supporting type in Palestine. The flourishing, beautifully situated colony of Zammarin, founded by Baron Rothschild, was within five hours of Haifa, high on the western slope of Carmel, looking down upon sea and coast, and the ruins of Cæsarea and Tantoura.

There were Jews among them energetically concerned as a Zangwill in the welfare of their race, and active in the establishment of new colonies; Jews of education and standing earnestly busied in the negotiations of land purchase, and its profitable cultivation by an ever-increasing stream of incoming colonists; Jews who were

good linguists, speaking German, French, Arabic, and often a smattering of English. And all of them seemed proud of their ancient race, and confident in the hope—not obtrusively—that the land which had once been their own would again, in the fulness of time, fall unto the scattered tribes of the chosen people for an inheritance according to prophecy (Ezekiel xlvii. 14). Then there was also the educated Syrian, advanced by strides in general culture since the days when Disraeli summed him up as, "vain, susceptible, endowed with brilliant though frothy imagination; a love of action so unrestrained that restlessness deprives it of energy; with so fine a taste as to be capricious; so ingenious as to appear ever inconsistent."

The underlying sentiment of that summing-up may be true in the main to-day, but education has struck strong roots into the country since Disraeli took his grand tour through Syria. What was then superficial has to many brought a training so excellent—chiefly through the medium of English-speaking or French institutions—that the number of subjects, political, historical, commercial, or literary, upon which a well-educated Syrian can converse with knowledge and decided cosmopolitan grasp is surprising. As linguists too they shine in comparison with the average English youth or man.

The fathers of the present generation after a slighter educational training upon Western methods felt the influence of ancestral habit too strong for them, and easily slipped back into the native condition of un-

trammelled robes and flat, shuffling slippers. Their sons of to-day retain most of the habits they have acquired at the American College or elsewhere, added sometimes to a few of the failings and even vices of the races from whom the training has been received, but it will take more than the years of a couple of generations for extraneous influences to work a permanent effect upon the versatile Syrian character and their life generally.

From a later historical standpoint Haifa is of interest, too, owing to the part it played in the Syrian campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte. When the young general led his army from the south by way of the Wadi Milh, using the old great road winding round the south-east of Carmel, and then emerged on the plain of Esdraelon, he sent Kleber forward to invest Haifa. The garrison straightway surrendered with all its stores of biscuit and rice, for the fame of the siege and capture of Jaffa had preceded the conqueror's approach.

At once Haifa became a very interesting point. A French garrison was established there, the command being given to Colonel Lambert, chief of the dromedary corps established by Bonaparte. The English sailing vessels of war were already in view, tacking in the bay between Akka and Haifa, the *Tiger* and the *Theseus*, with Sir Sidney Smith in command. They disappeared for several days, during which time the French camp was formed for the investment of Akka ; the troops expected a resistance no greater than they had fought against at Jaffa and Gaza.

Four days later the English vessels hove in sight

again, skimming like great birds over the waters. They approached Akka with caution as though fearing the town might already have passed into the enemy's hands. Reassured by the silence and probably by signals from the ramparts, they anchored in the roads near Akka, while the gunboats and Turkish vessels returning with them anchored across the bay at certain distances to Haifa. Early the next day the small boats approached Haifa, which they cannonaded vigorously for several hours.

Behind the walls of the little fort of Haifa Lambert held grim silence. By no sign whatever did he betray that he was able to respond in any way to the firing. As a matter of fact, all he possessed wherewith to defend the town was one howitzer and a single three-pounder. The English—for the gunboats were theirs—assured of victory, attempted to land, with the aim in view, no doubt, of getting possession of the valuable stores which had been deserted by the soldiers of Djezzar Pasha.

Lambert let them come on, waited until they were within gunshot, and then poured forth so effective a charge that the first sloop lowered its flag and surrendered, while the other promptly withdrew. In this way the French became possessed of a more powerful gun than they had been able to drag over the heavy ground from Jaffa, and the whole crew of the English sloop were taken prisoners.

In addition to this, writes an eye-witness of the incident, the French were able to celebrate their victory

in some excellent rum, of which they found a number of bottles in the captured boat. It was after this last capture that the report spread in the French camp how the English instilled courage into the crews before the fight by always distributing a large quantity of strong drink. Naturally the French patted themselves on the back for their own abstemiousness, though in their case it was certainly Hobson's choice, for water was often the sole drink obtainable, and even of that there was in this campaign nearly always a serious scarcity.

It is generally stated that the inhabitants of Haifa, and of the plain and foot-hills, welcomed the advent of the French as their deliverers from the oppressive tyranny of Achmed Pasha, commonly named Djezzar, or Butcher Pasha, on account of the fearful atrocities committed by him. They called themselves Christians and the friends of France and Sultan Kebir, as Bonaparte was invariably named by the native. Only the nomadic Arab or the Moslem seemed antagonistic to these invaders of their land. Bonaparte, in return for the confidence of the Christians, took them under his special protection.

A Syrian, well acquainted with an old Arab sheikh who died recently at the great age of one hundred and eight, told me that the old man had often related many an anecdote of the Napoleonic campaign. One of them was in connecton with this very spirit of the native towards the invaders.

In a village near Esfiyeh—one of the Druse villages

on Carmel overlooking the plain of the Kishon—a Moslem resident had the temerity to quarrel with and strike a Christian who was hawking goods of some kind for sale. The Christian, incensed at the treatment, went off to the French camp to lay his complaint before the general. The old Arab did not give the name of the general, but whoever it was sent a hundred soldiers to revenge the Christian—so related the old sheikh: they mounted the hillside, fell upon the villagers and shot them every one, women and children too. To this day the mound bears the name of "The Murder of the Bedawin."

The story the old sheikh most revelled in telling was how he himself, quite a boy at the time, had killed a wild boar, carried it with his friends in triumph to the French camp and presented it to General Kleber, whose noble figure, to the Arab mind, was the incarnation of all that was martial, lordly, and handsome.

And then, as now—it was somehow difficult to realise—the spring was throwing over the land her garment of rich and rare embroidery. The same brilliant carpets of the large golden daisies were spreading out on the banks and between the cactus shrubs bordering the seashore; the rock roses on the slopes were lavish of bloom as the English hedgerows in June; pink, blue, and yellow phlox were scattered down the hillside or grew in clusters between the stones.

On Mount Carmel the valley of tulips was more magnificent and marvellous than Solomon in all his glory. The sight, to me, of this wealth of colour and beauty,

springing as it were by magic out of the stones, which showed the rich little patches of soil between, opened out vistas of ever-widening truth conveyed in the Oriental imagery of the Book which is only clearly explained by a sojourn in the land of its origin.

For the excellency of Carmel was bursting forth even in its rocky flanks, the stony places were blossoming like the rose, the fig-trees were shooting into leaf, over the silvery foliage of the olive was flung a delicate tracery of green.

CHAPTER XIX

FLOWERS OF THE PLAINS OF GALILEE

REACTION followed this jubilant reign of the south wind over the gardens and flowers of sunny Haifa, on the eve of our journey to Nazareth and Tiberias. Rain fell in heavy showers, following a strong March wind from the west. In the night this veered to the north and so chilled our mental atmosphere, as well as the air that attacked us outwardly on the long drive in the open carriage, that it was only on the return journey, a few weeks later, that we truly imbibed the spirit and sentiment of the various places of interest through which we passed.

The climate was that of winter compared with the mildness of protected Haifa, the higher we ascended into the hills. The valley dipping into the plain of Esdraelon from the oak glades of Harithiyeh was a marsh, through which the horses had pains to drag their burden. Through one of the valleys cleft in the side of the hills which guard the north of the great plain the road climbed and wound in gradual ascent, until suddenly at one of the curves where the valley narrowed into a gorge we looked forward and saw enclosed between shielding hills, securely ensconced as in a nest, the grey and white

buildings of a little town. They clung to the western slope, were massed together on the narrow lap of the vale, and straggled a little way up the slope on the opposite side among the darkened, dense foliage of a wealth of olive-trees.

All was in shade, a dim, shadowy haze, as though Nazareth was still veiled in the mystery of that seclusion which has guarded from history, with a silence almost forbidding intrusion, the records of those thirty blameless years spent among the fifteen circling hills.

With the next bend in the road the vision vanished, but its spell was not broken, though we stopped shortly outside the town at a wayside inn, which had little that was Oriental in aspect or interior, except the large brass dish of live charcoal embers with its stand, quickly conjured up to thaw the chill that seemed to have penetrated to the marrow of one's bones.

The sense of that brooding mystery was not dispelled even by the sparkle of daylight on the white roofs and walls spreading out to the left as we skirted the town beneath the olive orchards on the way to the genial temperature of Tiberias. By Mary's Well on the northern outskirt, where the road turned off sharply to the right, the picturesque women of En-Nasira (Nazareth) were drawing water, and carrying their great pitchers away poised on the head with the grace and dignity of bearing natural to the humblest peasant in that Syrian land of the East.

The spring itself, from which the well was supplied, once bubbled in an open meadow near by, shaded

THE CITY OF TIBERIUS.

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perchance by fruitful trees and the leafy oak or carob such as are scattered among the olives on the hillside; it had been hidden from the blue of heaven under the roof of that little church of the Orthodox Greeks, called the Church of Gabriel, for more than a century past.

Over bare, rocky roads, with little cultivation between the villages, we came upon Cana of Galilee, or Kefr Kenna, set in its orchards of olives, and pomegranate-trees, which were just bursting into bud on every bough of the rich red and brown foliage.

The houses, though low and humble, were chiefly modern, though there were evidences of ancient ruins about. Undoubtedly through the centuries interest concerning this site must have waxed and waned alternately, according to the ascendency of Moslem or Christian environment, for on the spot where is now erected a small Franciscan church were once remains of an ancient Christian sanctuary; and from itineraries we gather that water-jars of the same kind as are now shown by the monks were also shown to pilgrims in the Middle Ages as relics of the original waterpots of stone in use at the wedding-feast in Cana of Galilee.

The low stone houses were ranged on sloping ground that mounted from the valley by which we approached. The flourishing cactus hedges and pleasant shrubs gave an air of friendliness to the hamlet that was hardly warranted by the persistency of those indigent inhabitants who came round with urgent demand for backsheesh.

At the head of the village was the well, or spring, with a plentiful flow of good water, having for trough an

ancient sarcophagus with garland ornamentation carved upon its stone surfaces. The splashing of the water, the little runlets escaping, the sturdy brook travelling as if rejoicing upon its way, had nurtured in the vicinity of the well a welcome growth of green and brilliant spring blossom.

Upward and onward the road climbed the valley of the pomegranates—the Wadi Rummaneh—a side offshoot of the great plain of the Battôf. The trees were luxuriant, the soil fertile and cultivated, but the road was a mere torrent-bed of boulders and stones washed bare of earth by the rush of winter rains sweeping down from the plateau above. We alighted and trudged behind our carriage like veritable pilgrims on foot.

We emerged at last from the hills leading down into Nazareth out upon the level tableland stretching for miles ahead in wave-like undulations. To the left across the plain the prosperous olive orchards of Teran showed their silvery foliage above the high sage-green rampart of cactus, with which the zealous villagers had barricaded from marauding touch the fruitful product of their industry.

And now as we moved eastward, the solitariness which so frequently strikes the traveller in this country became impressive and almost depressing. It seemed as though we were aimless wanderers in a land that none passed through and where no man dwelt, but yet a land with fertile soil that seemed to cry out for the tillage of man, that thereby it might yield of its fatness for the nurture of men who starved.

Suddenly from afar moved a dark mass over the plain at first like a cloud-shadow, then gaining substance as it approached until it grew into the semblance of a multitude in movement. We were on historic ground, near the plain where the French troops scattered the Turks more than a century ago, near famous fighting ground of the Saracens and Crusaders. What was this horde streaming over the plain, spreading out thinly on its wings, dense and crowded in its centre as a flock driven hard by herdsmen?

In this country, where the mirage presented its optical illusions in strange and manifold forms, had it trapped in the bygone years and held permanently fixed on its magic film a picture of the old Crusaders, rushing forward in a blaze of faith, set on fire anew by view of the mystic sites on the shores of the Galilean sea? And surely the phantasy was becoming reality, for there came wafted through the clarified atmosphere a sound as of many voices raised in song, and lo! a rider in fine array of martial bearing, on a white horse, became distinguishable, leading the multitude as a captain his troops or an Eastern shepherd his flock.

But though the approaching throng marched forward with the cross for their banner as did the Crusaders of the first Holy Wars, the sweet harmony of those distant strains heralded no triumphant song of victory but the hymns of pilgrims, singing as those who have come out of great tribulation, without yet giving thought to the pains of the latter stages of their life's pilgrimage. Instead of palms they were bearing flowers, nosegays

of flowers, wreaths of flowers in their hands, and on their heads, and flung over their shoulders like garlands of festal meaning.

It was a caravan of Russian pilgrims, escorted by a military cavass from Jerusalem with soldiers under his control. They came on sweetly singing as they toiled over the plain, men and women both old and young; horses, donkeys, mules, mixed up in wild confusion with the trudgers on foot and a few soldiers. Like the Gibeonites of old their garments had become ragged by reason of the very long journey, their shoes or sandals were also old and clouted upon their feet with bandages of every description, while some, lacking even old shoes or rags wherewith to bandage, walked barefooted over the ground. Others trudged with downcast heads, their shoulders bending beneath the weight of burdens like unto Christian's pack, for all carried a pilgrim's staff, and slung to their back a tin kettle or pot, and a canvas sack for provisions. Priests there were among them with unkempt beards and gowns green and smeared through rough wear, the faces beneath their tall cylindrical hats showing, for the most part, few of the qualities and virtues essential for the faithful pasturing of such a flock as this. Those that were mounted on ass or mule showed no consideration for the pedestrians.

We halted, to one side, in order to let them stream by without let or hindrance, to the number of some fifteen hundred. There was sunshine in the faces of most of the women. It was the holiday of their lives. They

seemed to be of those who passing through the valley of weeping make out of it a place of springs. They threw us smiles of greeting as though wishing us to share their joy; and as if moved by sudden impulse some of them stepped up to the carriage and thrust their flowers into our hands, and upon our knees, pausing for no acknowledgment but hurrying on as they threw further smiles of benediction over their shoulder to the singing accompaniment of the word, "Grazia! Grazia!"

It was our first meeting with the Russian pilgrims, that familiar feature of Palestine travel, the first of many and more intimate encounters. Still pondering over their simple faith, which in spite of the superstition, fanaticism, and dense ignorance cumbering it is so indubitably quickened by the spark divine, we approached the halting-stage on our journey, a pond fed by a spring near the ruined khan of Lubieh.

There were peasants by the wayside here, squatting among the stones on the margin of the pool. While the horses were being watered these men and women—not at all of a prepossessing type—gathered round the carriage offering their rings, trinkets, and knives for sales. They were still active in barter, when two newcomers approached the pool—a dark-browed Bedawi, with the thick black agal pressing a purple keffiyeh on his head, and a woman who was leading their horse to drink at the fountain.

She was young and beautiful, also unveiled, her waved, abundant hair growing low over her broad fore-

head. From the clear, sun-bronzed skin her eyes glowed soft as stars, yet dark as water in a deep well. Her figure was tall and of plastic mould, draped and swathed in a gown of red and white with loose pantaloons skirting her well-shaped ankles. She appeared indifferent to the gaze of onlookers, as she stood with one hand touching the horse's neck, the other holding the halter by which she held him.

Quickly sprang to view the artist's note-book, and then it was evident that the beautiful statue could see out of the corners of her eyes, for she immediately crouched down by the water's edge in the shadow of a bank of stones. The Bedawi, who was her husband, was willing that she should allow her face to be looked upon by the stranger, and expostulated in energetic voice, to which the peasants around added open wonder and derision that so easy a method of obtaining backsheesh was scorned.

"If I were her husband and she did not obey me, I would shoot her," said a hawk-nosed fellah emphatically.

The beauty peered round at the speaker, then at her husband, who stood scowling but silent near, his old flintlock slung across his shoulder ; and she laughed aloud, showing the perfect ivory of her teeth.

"He moved the mountains to get me," she said simply.

To this remark no one could find suitable comment, for the woman, as was shown by her dress, was from a distant part of the country. The horses were ready, and we ascended a gentle slope that raised the plain to a slightly higher elevation.

GALILEE : FLOWERS NEAR KARN HATTIN.

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And suddenly spread out before us we came upon the most wonderful sight of its kind it would be possible to obtain anywhere. All the latter part of the way the flowers scattered on the fertile ground had been attracting our notice through their beauty and colour, anemones of all hues, red ranunculi, ox-eyed daisies, buttercups, pink campion and a score of others. But here all the spring flowers of the world seemed to have gathered together on that wonderful tableland—

Flowers worthy of Paradise—

flowers of all hues, outspread in immense meadows, flowing river-like over the plain, melting up and over the undulations in one vast gorgeous iris—blue and pink borage, and tall campanula, purple lupins, crimson anemones, golden marguerites, pink campion, white daisies of giant growth, the pale yellow primrose of Palestine, all mingling together in riotous colour, or in separate lake-like sheets of a single colour. And every colour was repeated in lighter and deeper tints.

At once it was easy to perceive or comprehend how the wonderful patterns for the products of Oriental looms have originated, how from Nature's enamelling of the plains was born the innate taste that pieces together their beautiful mosaics, and creates even the picturesque and daring combinations of colour seen in the varied types of native costume. Never without the evidence of my own eyesight could I have imagined such luxuriant lustre of colour and beauty of form. In the picture that portrays these spring flowers of Galilee, with

the foreground of blue borage, the shadows of blue-greys and purples on the distant hills must not be mistaken for cloud-shadows. They are but a distant effect of the same pageant of nature as lay at the artist's feet, and like the shadows of clouds rolled over the hills and far away.

As we passed in rapt amazement through these flowery, fragrant meads, I saw more than once a long-legged stork standing as though deeply meditating, its white plumage, with the black feathers and the bright yellow bill, toning in with the flowers around. It was interesting to bring to mind that these birds, forming a contrast to the historic plain upon which they meditated, were looked upon as emblems of the Christian in the early ages of the Church. And just here on this self-same plain did General Junot of Napoleonic fame, in making a reconnaissance of the plain of Lubieh, fall into a vast gathering of the enemies, which had crossed the Jordan to this ideal camping ground for the floating population, of which the Turkish forces seemed in those days to consist.

On the route we had just traversed the French dragoons had advanced under Junot and Duvivier. Taken so much by surprise that they could almost distinguish the faces of the enemy who were advancing at walking pace with their motley array of big and small banners, their caracoling horses, their fanfare of bizarre music, the dragoons were for the moment thrown into confusion.

"Mes amis! Droit aux yeux!" shouted their

general, pointing his long sword toward the enemy. The crisis was staved, and what might have been a rout for the French was turned into a masterly retreat, and for the Turks, instead of victory, general discomfiture.

To the left, beyond the exquisite mosaic of the plain, rose a low, curious-shaped hill, having two conical peaks united by a ridge. Right to the summit extended the blue tapestry of lupin and borage blossom. The size of the hill was insignificant, but the position made the peaks conspicuous and at once recognisable as the famous Karn or Horns of Hattin.

Their historical fame dates from the time of the second Crusade, for it was on that broad, sweeping plain before them that the battle of Hattin was fought between the Franks and the Saracens, the battle that practically decided under which influence Palestine should eventually fall, that of Islam or Christendom. Because, it was after this celebrated victory near Tiberias that Jerusalem surrendered to Sālah-ed-Din, and his became the paramount power in Syria. Through the military genius of Richard Cœur de Lion in the third Crusade, Salah-ed-Din was forced into making a truce in which the sea border from Jaffa to Akka (St. Jean d'Acre) was conceded to the Christians, but Jerusalem itself, the desired Holy City, only came back to them for a mere decade in the fifth Crusade, so that the permanent ascendency of Moslem rule in the land appears to have set in with emphasis from the date of the battle of Hattin in 1187.

It was in the month of July, when all the magic

garment, clothing the surface of the plain in spring, would long have been burnt up by a blazing sun, when the softly verdant and flower-carpeted hills dipping over the ridge down to the Lake of Galilee would have been as walls of brass radiating the heat of a furnace at their base. For two long days the conflict raged until the hard-pressed Franks seem to have taken up their position on the Horns of Hattin, thrust up the hill on every side by the energy and persistency of the enemy.

Hidden from the point of view where we stood reflecting on the historical data connected with this little hill was a village of the same name at its northern base. Who can tell whether this village was in existence at that distant date? It is probable, however, as the excellent spring it contains must even then have been yielding its limpid flow, and where there are springs in thirsty Palestine the dwellings of man are generally around or near them. This vicinage of good water may appear at first sight to make the reason given by crusading chroniclers—namely, total lack of water beneath the blaze of summer heat and burden of battle—for the defeat, a reflection on the military tactics of the Franks compared with those of the Saracens under the astute generalship of Salah-ed-Din. As severe drought ensuing upon scarcity of the necessary winter rains affects the sources of even copious springs to-day, may it not be possible that in those July days of the year 1187 the fountain at the base of Karn Hattin was temporarily exhausted through a similar cause?

To the Crusaders is also given credit for establishing the tradition that, from the Horns of Hattin, Christ addressed the multitude in the Sermon on the Mount, a tradition that has won so strong a credence that to this day the hill is called the Mount of the Beatitudes.

Surely a more appropriate and ideal setting could not be imagined, though the actual eye of man may have selected another site more exact in the locality suited to the circumstances of the scriptural narrative. There was the "city set on a hill," Safed, the highest town in Northern Galilee, high and white, looking up on the range of hills which commands a view of the whole southern panorama of the plains, Mount Tabor in the far distance, and Karn Hattin enthroned on flowers, unto which even Solomon in all his glory—the acme of everything that was most magnificent and highly coloured in the minds of the people—could not be compared in wonder of beauty and hue. There was also the emerald grass of the far-sweeping, undulating plain, so slight of growth, so ephemeral of existence, that no sooner did the sun rise in power than it withered this product of the spring which "to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven."

We turned our gaze from the spot which had held imagination fixed; to the right was a brightly verdant stretch of the wheat that gives life, and hovering in air a golden butterfly, the symbol of the life immortal. Yonder against a distant blue range swept a strong foreground line of green. Bordering the track and rising among the flowers close at hand were large stones, grey, and tinged in streaks and patches with bright orange.

Very soon we came to the brow of the hill that looked down upon Tiberias. Below, blue and tranquil as an Alpine lake, yet with a remote beauty and unique distinction peculiarly its own, lay the Sea of Galilee.

The hills swept down on either side in broad sloping banks. In the wide hollow opened out at the base touching the water margin stretched the little town of Tiberias, enclosed in ancient walls which curved crescent-shape with the configuration of the shore, the horns outward. As we descended the hill by the steep, winding road, we seemed to be approaching the field of the cloth of gold. The sloping plain spreading out before the town was gilded with masses of the yellow blossom of wild mustard. They made a brilliant carpet in front of the deep purple ramparts, and extended in great parterres, running rivulets of living gold over the whole depression. Dark, velvety fleeced goats, cattle, and a few bright-garbed natives moved about in them.

Now I was near enough to see that the northern peak of the wall was castellated, and the ramparts irregular, because partly in ruins; it descended by gradients to the low depression of the plain where there came a gap in the barrier disclosing the grey and white roof of a flat, cube-shaped house. In a picturesque group above the wall clustered a slender minaret, the glittering white dome of a mosque, a tall palm-tree, and a smaller one below it. Over a tumble-down ancient tower which flanked the archway in front of the group rose the star-like, thickly plumed crest of another palm. Further to the right a ruined building, built into the wall, dark

WITHIN THE WALLS OF TIBERIUS.

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grey and severe, showed the pale water of the lake gleaming through the empty sockets of its window apertures. Then the rampart ran on without a break as far as the remnants of a tower, standing cone-shaped against the sea. The southern peak of the crescent revealed clustered houses within the town, for there the wall was in low massed ruins showing one tower at the extremity.

Backward from this tower the land ascended in a low, long slope as far as the ridge of the hill which rose immediately behind the town. The green of its surface was of a curious soft hue, similar to the green of the poplar, and with the same shimmery effect, enhanced by contrast with deep purple lava-stones and the variety of low scrub and thistle. Behind this deep-bosomed slope, looking south, rose a high hill of imposing basaltic formation, upon which there were great velvety curves and hollows, their edges yellow with the mustard flower which seemed to decorate them with festooned ribbons of gold.

The town was deeply shadowed by clouds in strong contrast to the brilliant sunlight throwing its dazzling almost blinding effect on the yellow-blossoming waste land. The walls stood out purple-black against a slate-grey sea, and the steep mountain-wall rising from the further side of the lake. Through the deep inscrutable grey of the water stretched one silver streak just below the precipitous eastern barrier.

Close to the town we passed some acres of ploughed land, the rich red soil testifying to the fertility of the

district. We entered the ancient city through the broken archway; to our right were the minaret and mosque, to the left, beneath the shadow of the ruined castle on sloping ground, stood the little hotel of one story, a small balcony running along the front and the entrance in the centre.

We took up our quarters in the Franciscan monastery, for which we had received a card of introduction from Jerusalem. To get to it we crossed the open space swarming with Arabs and Jews, and wended our way through a few dirty lanes to the big portal in the enclosing wall. Within were a large paved court and a few flower-beds; the Church of St. Peter was to the right, and straight in front, across the court, a stone terrace upon which opened the big dining-room for visitors and pilgrims. In the long stone corridor on the story above we were given a room with a window which, though iron-barred, looked out upon the lake.

END OF VOL. I

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